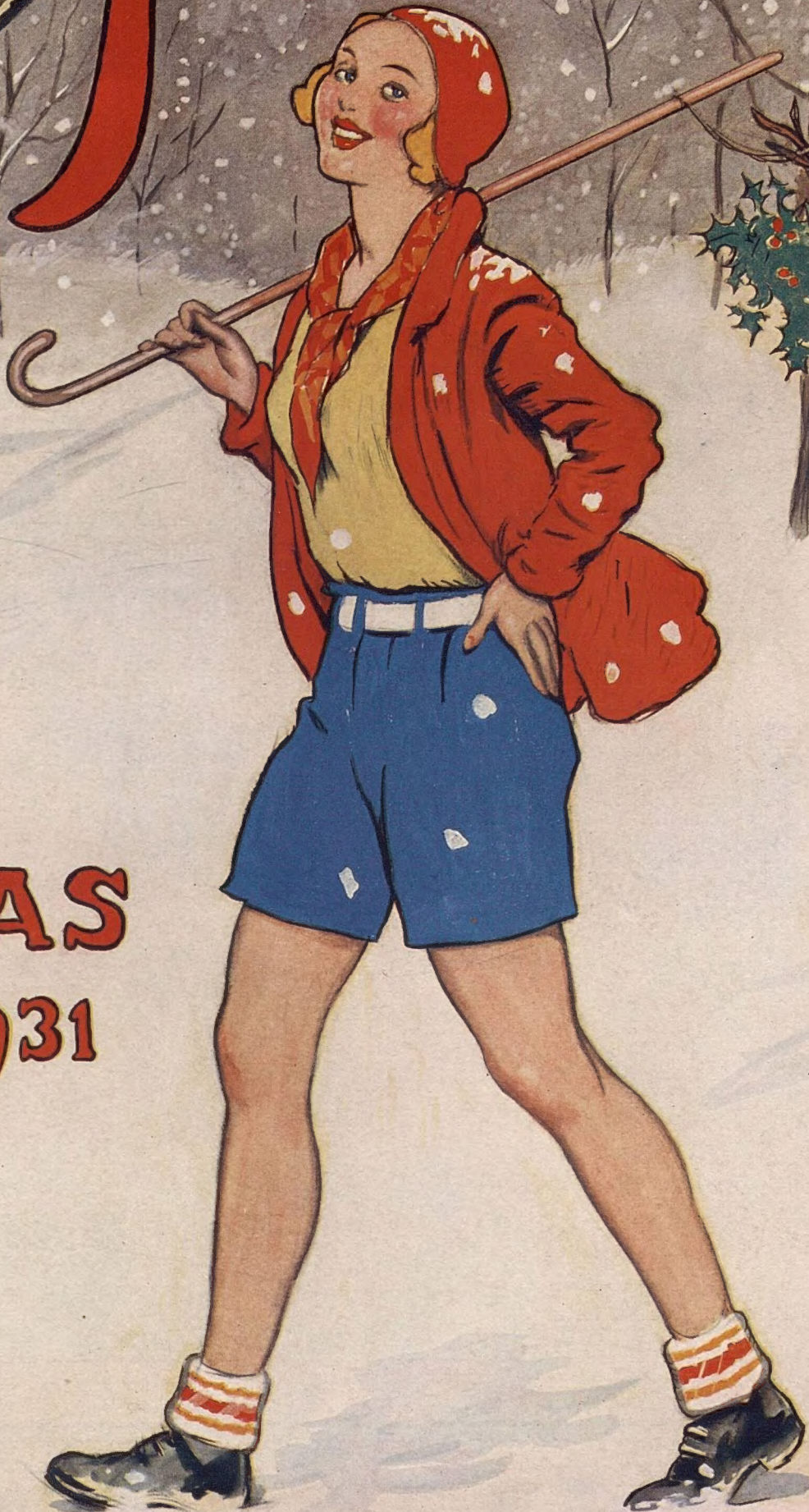


THE TATLER



XMAS
No 1931



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The XMAS *Tatler*



A SYMPHONY IN BLUE

By W. E. Webster, R.I., R.O.I.



"THE KING OF THE KENNEL" AND TWO FRIENDS

Drawn by G. Vernon Stokes

The bitch from the Belvoir, the dog from the Quorn,
The pick of their litter our puppy was born;
And the day he was entered he flew to the horn,
But rating and whip-cord he treated with scorn.

He guides them in covert, he leads them in chase,
Though the young and the jealous try hard for his place;
'Tis Bachelor always is first in the race;
He beats them for nose and he beats them for pace.

From the find to the finish the whole blessed day
How he cut out the work! How he showed us the way
When our fox doubled back where the fallow deer lay,
How he stuck to the line and turned short with his prey!

Though so handy to cast, and so patient to stoop,
When his bristles are up, you may swear its who-whoop!
For he'll dash at his fox like a hawk in her swoop,
And he carries the head, marching home to his soup.

—G. J. WHYTE MELVILLE.



GAME AND RUBBER

By BEN TRAVERS

Author of "Cuckoo in the Nest," "Rookery Nook," "Thark," "Plunder," "A Night Like This," "Turkey Time," etc.

Illustrated by GEORGE STAMPA

to be buck. Anyhow, I shall feel vewwy annoyed if there isn't pig."

The Malay States were rather forced upon him as a honeymoon retreat, for he was sleeping director of a small rubber company owning two estates in Selangor. Thanks entirely to his affluence these two estates remained solvent, but it had become essential that they should be amalgamated under the charge of the competent manager of the one estate, and that the sack should be presented to the abortive manager of the other. Mr. Pound was obviously the right person to go out and see to this. For one thing, he was the only man on the board who could afford to make the trip.

But Digby Pound, who hated the idea of interviewing managers, and was positively terrified of the prospect of having to sack one of them, and found it, moreover, extremely difficult to remember which of the two he was instructed to sack, decided to get through with this troublesome business stuff in as few puzzled hours as possible and then to push hastily on up-country for the shootin'.

He need not have worried his head about which manager was the man to keep. Mr. Willoughby Pink, who ruled the Bukit Nanas estate, possessed to a marked degree the exasperating quality of keen efficiency. He knew things; had a grasp of things. Quite apart from running the estate he knew all about wireless, weather prophecy, the human organs, the organs of a clock, of a piano, of a type-writer, a telephone, and a terrier. Could make things. Did. Could make electricity, a bungalow, a telescope, a chicken-incubator, explosives, and curry; and held forth upon things in the quick, pressing tones of an enthusiastic knower and maker; while Mrs. Pink ministered to him with gasping admiration and obedience.

Mr. Pink was a man of thirty-five, medium height, and sufficient confident breeding. He had a pushful little ginger moustache and eyes which wore a slight perpetual stare of zeal for things, and arms with muscles tight and tumid from the everlasting exercise of doing things. Jean Pink had pinched nostrils and rather protruding teeth, but had enjoyed in the days of her Streatham spinsterhood the reputation of being "a sweet girl." So that's her.

Five miles away from Bukit Nanas lay Kulu Glap, the sister estate. Here the manager was a Mr. Jones, a bachelor and, in the opinion of his rival, "exactly one hundred and fifty per cent. inefficient."

"Jones," said Willoughby Pink fairly often to Jean Pink, "is mere human ullaage. No head, no initiative, knows nothing, does nothing, makes nothing. And, mark me, he souses."

So the news that Nemesis, in the person of the eminent but hitherto unsampled Mr. Pound, was on the way from home did not surprise Mr. Pink in the least. "Told you

(Continued overleaf)

THOSE philosophers, the Chinese, provide us with a shrewd, unconscious comment on our marriage rites by employing a very similar sort of ceremony for their funerals.

First comes the awe-inspiring, religious part of the business, with a good deal of processional ritual and the wailing of lugubrious numbers by female relatives—as at an English wedding. This over, they relapse into an orgy of feasting, liquoring, clowns, fireworks, kite-flying, and other forms of whoopee.

And, after all, have they not better cause to rejoice at their funerals than we at our marriages? They have consigned a soul to bliss celestial and eternal; we, to bliss not only terrestrial, but in many cases very, very temporary.

Still, one cannot blame a girl like Evie Crane for marrying Digby Pound. With all said and done, a man who combines the maximum of income with the minimum of intellect is a very useful husband to have and to hold. And if it comes to that, look at his luck in the matter. A girl so bright and attractive—twenty-four; an authority on cocktails, dancing with misunderstood husbands, sun-bathing, hats, and the niceties of cutting-in on the Kingston By-pass—what more could even a Digby Pound desire?

She had refused some quite eligible young men too. Refused, for instance, Bertie Lumsden. ("Not a hope, Bertie dear. I'm not getting married till I've had all the fun I want.") Refused Clarence Pole. ("Clarrie, darling, don't be so grotesque—sitting there proposing in a beach-suit.") Refused Wilkins Soullby. ("Please, Wilkie—that's quite enough of that solemn nonsense about your urge. I'm not sure it's decent, and anyhow it's shocking waste of time in a taxi.") Refused even the Hon. Fitzalan Pennington-Chesterby. ("Sez you.")

So, naturally, Digby Pound felt quite pleased at getting her, and he bore her away in some triumph on a honeymoon tour in the Far East. But the tour was not solely to be devoted to the usual Elysian delectations of the newly-wed. Digby Pound hoped, in addition, to find time for a somewhat indefinite programme of slaughter in the Malayan forests. He told Evie so. He said:

"I'm going pwepared for elephant. There's pwetty certain to be tiger. It stands to weason that there ought

so, Jean. Bound to happen before long. One of us is for it. Poor Jones."

Further intimations only went to confirm the impression that Mr. Pound's visit was of a punitive nature. He and Mrs. Pound were to arrive by the evening train from Kuala Lumpur. The Pinks would meet them at the local station, where the bulk of the shootin' paraphernalia and other gear could be dumped for the night. Mr. Pound would visit both estates and continue his journey next day.

"Quick work," commented Mr. Pink. "But I suppose he'll come back again when I've taken over Glap as well."

On the evening appointed Willoughby Pink sprang from his bungalow siesta, deluged himself heartily with cold water from the earthen-ware tub in his bath-room, and vigorously summoned his household to action with Malayan vociferations and the clapping of hands. In response to these, two Chinese boys emerged from the hut in the compound, their toilet no more elaborate than that of a hen who but opens her eyes, shakes her feathers, and is re-animate. Willoughby rallied them to the great occasion and returned to his bed-room to arouse his still dormant but willing spouse.

Jean Pink, a trifle bleached by the relentless climate, but anxious to do her husband honour in this important hour, completed a zealous but punctual toilet and joined him at tea on the veranda. It was characteristic of Willoughby that, even on so momentous an evening, he should be discovered conducting research work concerning a tin of natural milk. When he looked up his nose was wearing a dewdrop of dairy produce.

"They pretend to guarantee the full nutritive properties of this cow-juice," he said, with that touch of levity which seasoned all his dissertations. "But I doubt it. I'll pop into the lab. at Kuala Lumpur one day and test a tin for the vitamins."

"That would be wonderful," said Jean. "I suppose we ought to start soon for the station."

"Oh, no hurry. Have your tea. Try a spot of fruit with it. Have a cheekoo. Or a dookoo."

At this moment the telephone bell rang, and on the private line which communicated the two estates the voice of the egregious Jones nasally proclaimed itself. The conversation was a brief one and, indeed, cannot be held to be a conversation at all, being entirely monopolized by Jones.

"See here, Pink," said this Jones. "About this blasted visit. I know your idea. You're going to meet this stiff and his fat wife, and you're going to tell them what a fine job you've made of your estate and what an utter mess-up I've made of mine. And you're going to take him to your place and show him your patent wireless outfit and your patent telephone system and your patent electric cooking gadget and your patent tool-house and out-house and fowl-house. And then your idea is to motor him over here and show him the difference, before I've had a chance of meeting him at all. Well, cut that out, see. I'll bring my own car over and get him here myself. So go to hell. Are you there?"

Willoughby returned to the tea-table with an air of disdainful ascendancy. "Jones knows what's coming to him," he said. "He's half-pickled already."

Soon beneath twin sun-helmets Willoughby and Jean were coursing along the clean-cut red road which linked the estate with civilization, bounded first by plateaux of stunted trees receding into a distant blur from the foreground in well-arrayed parallel lines, and soon by the deep, umbrageous vegetation of the tropical jungle. The car was an inexpensive one supplied by the company, but it had been overhauled and tuned up and decarbonized and generally readjusted by Willoughby Pink into what he described as "top-side, number one order." Moreover, Mr. Pink indulged the habit of admonishing the car as he drove it with little jaunty exhortations: "Steady the buffs, old lady. No dirty work at the cross-roads this evening, thank you." Jean admired, but could not share her husband's rollicking confidence. She was completely overawed by the prospect of having to entertain Mr. and Mrs. Pound, particularly—need it be said—the latter.

Jean indulged vague, pessimistic forecasts of what the Pounds would be like. Nomenclature always plays a great part in such predictions. Mr. Pound. An enormous man, surely—rotund, elderly, heavy-browed; as formidable as Mr. Shilling would have been lean, prying, and steely; and as Mr. Penny would have been little, mild, and inoffensive.

But however fearful Mr. Pound might prove, Mrs. Pound was the one. In Mrs. Pound Jean anticipated a middle-aged, petulant lady already yellowing in the heat. Despite Willoughby's



"Am I to understand, then, that it is Mrs. Pound that I'm kissing?"

scientific improvements she would find sniffing, unspoken fault with the bungalow, the boys, the food. A snob too, for a certainty, who would make Jean feel glaringly Streatham even at Bukit Nanas.

The Pinks arrived at the station. In came the train—Willoughby doing a good deal of preliminary Mussolini stuff with the native porters; Jean wearing a smile like a forlorn pennant bravely flying over a lost cause. The Pounds descended, and she gave an audible sigh of relief. Mrs. Pound was a very elegant and charming-looking girl in the early twenties. And Mr. Pound was Mr. Penny.

As Mr. Pound recoiled from the first exuberant blast of Willoughby's welcome, the latter took but one flashing glance at him and summed him up in a moment. This Pound displayed all the sartorial, Anglo-Oriental perfection and monocled dignity of the colonial official on tour. He knew the type. Deep. Deliberative. Some fools, like Jones, might easily mistake Pound for a goomf. But Willoughby knew the depths of intellect which lay beneath that monocled and listless dignity.

Willoughby wasted no time. Started right in to make a good impression. Before the car was back at the bungalow Digby Pound had been impressed from his state of natural simplicity into a sort of bewildered coma. Jean, on the other hand, found Mrs. Pound delightfully easy and receptive. She was full of bright and unspoiled interest and excitement and chatted and didn't mind the heat a bit so far, and thought it all too utterly picturesque and romantic, and saw a monkey on the road and thought the monkey too simply soul-warming.

She was just as enthusiastic when Jean shyly conducted her round the bungalow. And while Willoughby took Mr. Pound away to talk shop to him, she reclined in a long chair on the veranda and was as sweet as she looked; and when Jean modestly confessed to Streatham she even invented two fictitious aunts at Streatham herself.

"I love it here," she said. "It's simply glorious on this beautifully cool veranda looking at those too exquisite hills. I love those long cane blinds you've got—what do you call them, chicks or something? And these delicious bath-rooms out here where you don't get into a bath at all but just stand and sloosh. Look at that divine lizard on the wall. I do think Malay women are fascinating, and those taller blacker ones who carry things on their heads and sway their bodies—Indians of some kind, aren't they?—I must pick up that walk of theirs. As for the native children running about naked with big tummies, I simply

want to cry with joy at them. Oh, I'm sure I could be quite happy out here. Tell me, do you get any visitors at all?"

"No, not many. Of course, the agent, Mr. Purvis, from Singapore, comes sometimes. And there's Mr. Jones on the other estate. But we don't see much of him."

"Why not?" asked Mrs. Pound. "What's the matter with Mr. Jones?"

"Oh, I—don't want to say anything against him," said Jean.

"Gracious! Is he as bad as that? He sounds rather intriguing."

"Now, sir," said Willoughby to Mr. Pound, "I just want to show you this little idea of mine. It's a graph, showing at a glance production costs on a scale *pro rata* the gross pre-restriction period prime valuation per pound raw.

"Mrs. Pound rather tactlessly butted in her borrowed night attire . . . Pound seemed to be taking very thorough precautions against the fever"



Rather natty, if I may say so."

"Wighty-ho," said Mr. Pound. "By the way, do you get pig here much?"

"Not now. I had a regular plague of wild pig when I first took over, but I soon got rid of them."

"What did you shoot 'em with?"

"Oh, I didn't waste time shooting them. I gassed them. Now, sir, I'd like you to glance at this graph, because I'm afraid you won't find Jones has anything to show you like this. That, of course, is between you and me and the gate-post."

"Weally," said Mr. Pound, admirably controlling his dismay about this show-down of Jones. "I wonder how far you'd have to go now for pig."

"If you were going to be here longer I might fix you up for an interview with friend porker," said Willoughby with ready affability. "But if we're going to Glap, sir, we ought to breeze over there before it gets dark. We can take this graph with us. And here's another little stunt of mine I can show you to-night—tabulated average hour-sheet per head of coolie. Jones has nothing that —"

"Half a tick," said Mr. Pound. "What's that thing?"

"That? Oh, a patent soda-making gadget I fixed up. You see, this table shows you your wages roll, not only actual, but —"

"Oh," said Mr. Pound. "What's that soda thing for, anyhow?"

"Oh, just in case anyone who calls in wants a whisky-and-soda, that's all."

"By gad," exclaimed Mr. Pound. "How does it work?"

It had been Mrs. Pound's intention to accompany Digby to Kulu Glap; but Willoughby Pink, fixing his intuitive gaze on some ominous gloom which had appeared on the horizon, advised her that a storm was on its way. He even counselled Mr. Pound to defer his visit to Glap until the morning.

"No, let's go and get it over," said Mr. Pound. "It won't take long, will it? We can get back for dinner."

So Mr. Pound was placed in the car and borne away, well primed with many pretty dire secrets concerning Jones between himself and his appropriate companion the gate-post.

"We'll take the main road," Willoughby informed him. "There's a short cut across the two estates, but it's a bad surface and pretty tough on the car. Jones uses it, but I don't consider it's fair to bash the company's cars about over stuff like that. In fact, I'm afraid you may find Jones has got his car into pretty poor shape."

Mrs. Pound remained in her rattan chair and dreamily watched the clouds preparing their roseate bed for Phœbus, while from the south spread the ominous gloom. Jean, with a murmured excuse, went to inspect the special preparations which were afoot in the cook-house. A moment later from the shadows beneath the veranda steps came the sounds of some rather erratic car-stoppage, and up the short flight of steps to the side of Mrs. Pound came Jones.

Jones was thirty, tall and slim. His white duck suit was clean for the occasion, but he had left it unfastened at the neck, and as he came up the steps he made some quick and unsuccessful attempts to push wayward strands of straight hair back into decent order on his head. His expression was whimsical and mischievous like a satyr's; but as he stood before Mrs. Pound this became slowly transformed into a wide-eyed and delightful amazement.

Mrs. Pound sat up, her eyes never leaving his. She, too, was astonished, but astonishment quickly gave way to a look of enraptured, and indeed enrapturing, pleasure.

"Evie, for crying out loud!" said Jones.

"You! Well, of all the—Joneses!" said Evie.

Jones flung his soft hat into a bowl of rare Oriental flora which Jean Pink had arranged with lavish care for the occasion, and himself on to his knees beside Evie.

"Am I to understand then that it is Mrs. Pound that I'm kissing?" he inquired a moment or two later.

"Yes, I'm afraid so."

"And where is Mr. —?"

"Gone to see you."

"Ah! With that little loathsome Pink. And serve him right."

"Yes, but be careful what you're doing, Johnny. Mrs. Pink's about somewhere."

"I don't care for Mrs. Pink, or Pink or Pound or anyone else," replied Jones, continuing to be careless what he was doing.

"How marvellous this is," she said. "I thought I was never going to see you again."

"Yes, I remember your telling me that when you socked me over the ear in a summer-house."

"Well, you asked for it, Johnny. And I was young and innocent then."

"If you thought that what I asked for was a sock on the ear you were certainly very innocent."

"Well, what do we do now?" asked Evie.

"Pop into my car and go back to my bungalow."

"But I've told you—my husband's gone there."

"H'm," said Jones. "Your outlook has certainly broadened since the summer-house episode. Well now, listen. Pink always goes by the good road. We'll go, rather slowly, down the bad road. By the time we get there all these Pinks and Pounds and people will be on their way back."

"Yes. And then?"

"And then I ring up and say how very sorry I am about it, and that I'm bringing you back here again after dinner."

Evie gazed thoughtfully out into the deepening shadows.

"Yes," she said, "that sounds pretty all right, I suppose."

"It sounds a dashed sight better than that to me," said Jones.

"Don't be an ass. What I mean is it sounds a fairly reasonable alibi."

She gave poor Jean Pink little opportunity for more than a few startled and intermittent "Oh's." "What do you think? Mr. Jones has turned up here, and I find he's an old friend of mine in England, and he's missed my husband of course, so he's going back to meet him and wants me to go, too, so I think I will come back with them to dinner. You don't mind, do you? No. So extraordinary. Jones, of course—I mean I never thought of it for a moment when I heard the name—naturally, I mean, Jones—why should one? *Au revoir*. The storm's blown over, I think."

The first warning rumble of thunder sounded in the distance as she turned and skipped down the steps into the car.

The bungalow at Kulu Glap possessed none of those fruits of efficiency which characterized the Pinks' domicile. Willoughby did his best to prepare Mr. Pound for a severe shock in the course of his drive, and by the time they reached their destination the worthy director was chafing almost beyond endurance at his continual association with the gate-post. It was too dark to discern any of the outstanding deficiencies of the estate itself, but the comparative meanness of the manager's dwelling surely justified a little jocular in-take of the breath from Willoughby as he conducted Mr. Pound up on to Jones's veranda.

The whole place was woefully untidy, but, deep as ever, Mr. Pound did not appear to notice this. Indeed, his first action was to cross the veranda at a pace of which he had hitherto seemed incapable, and to screw his monocle into rapt examination of one or two indifferently mounted heads on the crumbling walls.

"By jingo!" exclaimed Mr. Pound. "Pig."

There was no sign of Jones, but Willoughby issued a peremptory command and a sheepish head-boy, pulling on a sadly soiled duck coat, shuffled in to confirm the fact that the tuan was out.

"H'm. Very queer behaviour," commented Willoughby. "He knew you were coming this evening. Still, I don't think it's any good your hanging about, sir. I know what Jones is."

"If you knew *where* he is you might be some good," said Mr. Pound, exhibiting for the first time the signs of a chronic inferiority complex in revolt.

"Ha. Yes, sir. Point is we shall be late for dinner if we stay here long."

(Continued on p. ii)



HOMEWARDS—FOR CHRISTMAS

By Chas. Pears, R.O.I.



THE ECHO

By A. K. Macdonald

DISTINGUISHED "WAITS"



A COLLECTION OF CELEBRITIES

By Autori

In the window is that great patron of music and conductor of grand opera, Sir Thomas Beecham. The orchestra is composed of Mascagni and Toscanini, and the vocalists are Tauber, Rosa Ponselle, Gigli, and Chaliapine, and it is to be hoped that Autori's life will not be curtailed when all these people see what he thinks they look like

A Meal with a Magician

By Professor J. B. S. HALDANE

Illustrated by ARTHUR WATTS

I HAVE had some very odd meals in my time, and if I liked I could tell you about a meal in a mine, or a meal in Moscow, or a meal with a millionaire. But I think you will be more interested to hear about a meal I had one evening with a magician, because it is more unusual. People don't often have a meal of that sort, for rather few people know a magician at all well, because there aren't very many in England. Of course, I am talking about real magicians. Some conjurers call themselves magicians, and they are very clever men. But they can't do the sort of things that real magicians do. I mean, a conjurer can turn a rabbit into a bowl of goldfish, but it is always done under a cover or behind something, so that you can't see just what is happening. But a real magician can turn a cow into a grandfather clock with people looking on all the time. Only it is very much harder work, and



"Who milked her into a silver cream jug"

no one could do it twice a day, as the conjurers do with rabbits.

When I first met Mr. Leakey I never guessed he was a magician. I met him like this. I was going across the Haymarket about five o'clock one afternoon. When I got to the refuge by a lamp-post in the middle I stopped, but a little man who had crossed so far with me went on. Then he saw a motor-bus going down the hill and jumped back, which is always a silly thing to do. He jumped right in front of a car, and if I hadn't grabbed his overcoat collar and pulled him back on to the refuge I think the car would have knocked him down. For it was wet weather, and the road was very greasy, so it only skidded when the driver put the brakes on.

The little man was very grateful but dreadfully frightened, so I gave him my arm across the street, and saw him back to his home which was quite near. I won't tell you where it was, because if I did you might go there and bother him, and if he got really grumpy it might be very awkward indeed for you. I mean, he might make one of your ears as big as a cabbage-leaf, or turn your hair green, or exchange your right and left feet, or something like that. And then everyone who saw you would



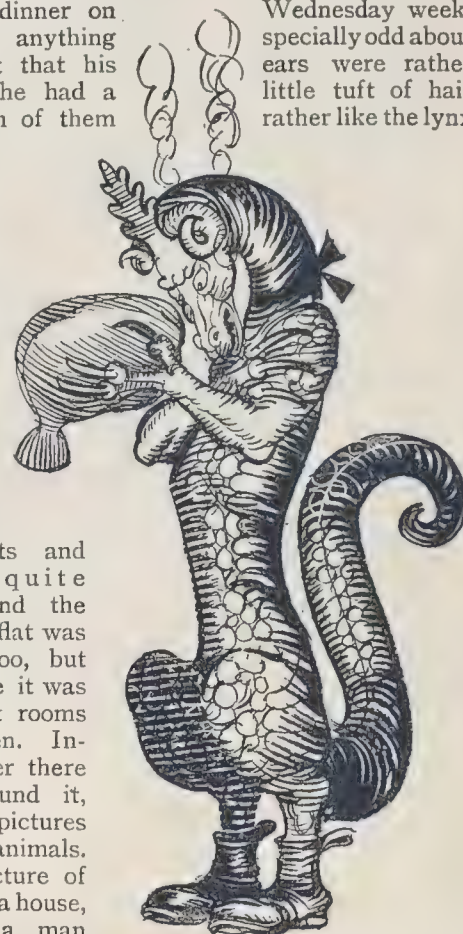
"I chose some water and some very good wine"

burst out laughing, and say, "Here comes wonky Willie, or lop-sided Lizzie," or whatever your name is.

"I can't bear modern traffic," he said, "the motor-buses make me so frightened. If it wasn't for my work in London I should like to live on a little island where there are no roads, or on the top of a mountain, or somewhere like that." The little man was sure I had saved his life, and insisted on my having dinner with him, so I said I would come to dinner on Wednesday week.

I didn't notice anything him then, except that his large ears were rather on the top of each of them at the Zoo. I remember I thought if I had hair there I would shave it off. He told me that his name was Leakey and that he lived on the first floor.

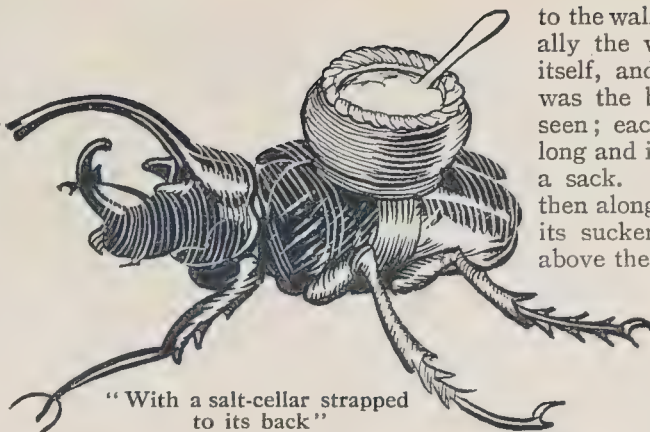
Well, on Wednesday week I went to dinner with him. I went upstairs in a block of flats and knocked at a quite ordinary door, and the little hall of the flat was quite ordinary too, but when I got inside it was one of the oddest rooms I have ever seen. Instead of wallpaper there were curtains round it, embroidered with pictures of people and animals. There was a picture of two men building a house, and another of a man with a dog and a cross-bow hunting rabbits. I



"He held the fish in each hand alternately"

know they were made of embroidery because I touched them, but it must have been a very funny sort of embroidery because the pictures were always changing. As long as you looked at them they stayed still, but if you looked away and back again they had altered. During dinner the builders had put a fresh storey on the house, the hunter had shot a bird with his cross-bow, and his dog had caught two rabbits.

The furniture was very funny, too. There was a book-case made out of what looked like glass with the largest books in it that I ever saw, none of them less than a foot high, and bound in leather. There were cupboards running along the tops of the bookshelves. The chairs were beautifully carved, with high wooden backs, and there were two tables. One was made of copper and had a huge crystal globe on it. The other was a solid lump of wood about ten feet long, four feet wide, and three feet high, with holes cut in it so that you could get your knees under it. There were various odd things hanging from the ceiling. At first I couldn't make out how the room was lit. Then I saw



"With a salt-cellar strapped to its back"

to the wall with its suckers, and gradually the whole beast came out, dried itself, and crawled up the wall. It was the biggest octopus I have ever seen; each arm was about eight feet long and its body was about as big as a sack. It crawled up the wall and then along the ceiling, holding on by its suckers like a fly. When it got above the table it held on by one arm only, and with the other seven got plates and knives and forks out of the cupboards above the bookshelves and laid the table with them.

"That's my servant Oliver," said Mr. Leahey. "He's much better than a person, because he has more arms to work with, and he can hold on to a plate with about ten suckers, so he never drops one."

When Oliver, the octopus, had laid the table, we sat down and he offered me a choice of water, lemonade, beer, and four different kinds of wine with his seven free arms, each of which held a different bottle. I chose some water and some very good red wine from Burgundy.

All this was so odd that I was not surprised to notice that my host was wearing a top hat; but I certainly did think it a little queer when he took it off and poured two platefuls of soup out of it.

"Ah, we want some cream," he added. "Come here, Phyllis." At this a small green cow, about the size of a rabbit, ran out of a hutch, jumped on to the table, and stood in front of Mr. Leahey, who milked her into a silver cream jug which Oliver had handed down for the purpose. The cream was excellent, and I enjoyed the soup very much.

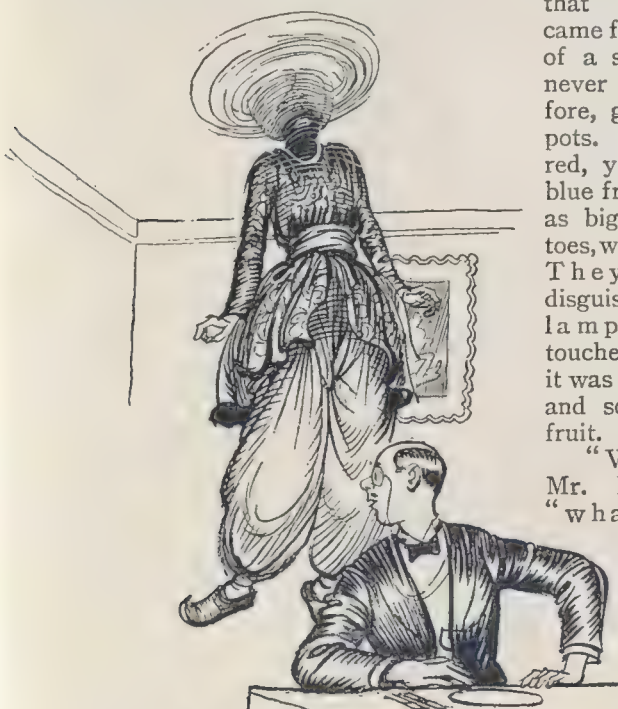
"What would you like next?" said Mr. Leahey.

"I leave it to you," I answered.

"All right," he said; "we'll have grilled turbot and turkey to follow. Catch us a turbot, please, Oliver, and be ready to grill it, Pompey."

At this Oliver picked up a fish-hook with the end of one of his arms, and began making casts in the air like a fly-fisher. Meanwhile I heard a noise in the fireplace, and

(Continued overleaf)



"He came feet first through the ceiling"

that the light came from plants of a sort I had never seen before, growing in pots. They had red, yellow, and blue fruits about as big as tomatoes, which shone. They weren't disguised electric lamps, for I touched one and it was quite cold, and soft like a fruit.

"Well," said Mr. Leahey, "what would you like for dinner?"

"Oh, whatever you've got," I said.

"You can have whatever you like," he said. "Please choose a soup."

So I thought probably he got his dinner from a restaurant and I said, "I'll have Bortsch," which is a red, Russian soup with cream in it.

"Right," he said, "I'll get it ready. Look here, do you mind if we have dinner served the way mine usually is? You aren't easily frightened, are you?"

"Not very easily," I said.

"All right, then, I'll call my servant, but I warn you he's rather odd."

At that Mr. Leahey flapped the tops and lobes of his ears together. It made a noise like when one claps one's hands, but not so loud. Out of a large copper pot about as big as the copper you wash clothes in which was standing in one corner, came what at first I thought was a large wet snake. Then I saw it had suckers all down one side, and was really the arm of an octopus. This arm opened a cupboard and pulled out a large towel with which it wiped the next arm that came out. The dry arm then clung on



"Good night," said Mr. Leahey

Pompey came out. He was a small dragon about a foot long, not counting his tail, which measured another foot. He had been lying on the burning coals and was red hot. So I was glad to see that as soon as he got out of the fire he put on a pair of asbestos boots which were lying in the fender on to his hind feet.

"Now, Pompey," said Mr. Leakey, "hold your tail up properly. If you burn the carpet again, I'll pour a bucket of cold water over you. (Of course, I wouldn't really do that, it's very cruel to pour cold water on to a dragon, especially a little one with a thin skin)," he added in a low voice which only I could hear. But poor Pompey took the threat quite seriously. He whimpered, and the yellow flames which were coming out of his nose turned a dull blue. He waddled along rather clumsily on his hind legs, holding up his tail and the front part of his body. I think the asbestos boots made walking rather difficult for him, though they saved the carpet and no doubt kept his hind feet warm. But, of course, dragons generally walk on all four feet and seldom wear boots, so I was surprised that Pompey walked as well as he did.

I was so busy watching Pompey that I never saw how Oliver caught the turbot, and by the time I looked up at him again he had just finished skinning it, and threw it down to Pompey. Pompey caught it in his front paws, which had cooled down a bit, and were just about the right temperature for grilling things. He had long thin fingers with claws on the ends, and held the fish on each hand alternately, holding the other against his red-hot chest to warm it. By the time he had finished and put the grilled fish on to a plate which Oliver handed down Pompey was clearly feeling the cold, for his teeth were chattering, and he scampered back to the fire with evident joy.

"Yes," said Mr. Leakey, "I know some people say it is cruel to let a young dragon cool down like that, and liable to give it a bad cold. But I say a dragon can't begin to learn too soon that life isn't all fire and flames, and the world is a colder place than they'd like to be. And they don't get cold if you give them plenty of sulphur to eat. Of course a dragon with a cold is an awful nuisance to itself and everyone else. I've known one throw flames for a hundred yards when it sneezed. But that was a full-grown one, of course. It burnt down one of the Emperor of China's palaces. Besides, I really couldn't afford to keep a dragon if I didn't make use of him. Last week, for example, I used his breath to burn the old paint off the door, and his tail makes quite a good soldering iron. Then he's really much more reliable than a dog for dealing with burglars. They might shoot a dog, but leaden bullets just melt the moment they touch Pompey. Anyway, I think dragons were meant for use, not ornament. Don't you?"

"Well, do you know," I answered, "I am ashamed to say that Pompey is the first live dragon I've ever seen."

"Of course," said Mr. Leakey, "how stupid of me. I have so few guests here except professional colleagues that I forgot you were a layman. By the way," he went on, as he poured sauce out of his hat over the fish, "I don't know if you've noticed anything queer about this dinner. Of course some people are more observant than others."

"Well," I answered, "I've never seen anything like it before."

For example, at that moment I was admiring an enormous rainbow-coloured beetle which was crawling towards me over the table with a salt-cellar strapped on its back.

"Ah, well then," said my host, "perhaps you have guessed that I'm a magician. Pompey, of course, is a real dragon, but most of the other animals here were people before I made them what they are now. Take Oliver, for example. When he was a man he had his legs cut off by a railway train. I couldn't stick them on again because my magic doesn't work against machinery. Poor Oliver

was bleeding to death, so I thought the only way to save his life was to turn him into some animal with no legs. Then he wouldn't have any legs to have been cut off. So I turned him into a snail and took him home in my pocket. But whenever I tried to turn him back into something more interesting, like a dog, it had no hind legs. But an octopus has really got no legs. Those eight tentacles grow out of its head. So when I turned him into an octopus he was all right. And he had been a waiter when he was a man, so he soon learnt his job. I think he's much better than a maid, because he can lift the plates from above and doesn't stand behind one and breathe down one's neck. You may have the rest of the fish,



"ITSH A-A-LIE!"

Oliver, and a bottle of beer. I know that's what you like."

Oliver seized the fish in one of his arms and put it into an immense beak like a parrot's but much bigger, which lay in the centre of the eight arms. Then he took a bottle of beer out of a cupboard, unscrewed the cork with his beak, hoisted himself up to the ceiling with two of his other arms, and turned over so that his mouth was upwards. As he emptied the bottle he winked one of his enormous eyes. Then I felt sure he must be really a man, for I never saw an ordinary octopus wink.

The turkey came in a more regular way. Oliver let down a large hot plate and then a dish cover on to it. There was nothing in the cover as I could see. Mr. Leakey got up, took a large wand out of an umbrella stand, pointed it at the dish cover, said a few words, and there was the turkey steaming hot when Oliver lifted the cover off it.

"Of course, that's easy," said Mr. Leakey; "any good conjurer could do it, but one can never be sure the food you get in that way is absolutely fresh. That's why I like to see my fish caught. But birds are all the better for being

(Continued on p. 59)



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"SPANISH LACE"

A Study by Peter North

THE SISTERS OF CHANGTON MARGERY

By EX-PRIVATE X

(Author of "War is War," "Someone in the Room," etc.)

Illustrated by DUDLEY TENNANT

THE other day my friend Bernard Hildon punched the head of George Flake for calling him a liar. This, in our present state of civilization, is highly regrettable. The civilized way of calling a man a liar is to cough, murmur something rapidly about something else, and leave his presence in a marked manner. You thus let him know what you think of him without quite giving him an excuse for hitting you. On both sides, I think, it was a very crude affair.

It happened through Bernard telling George Flake the story I am about to relate. It is possible that he stretched it a bit—I don't know, for I wasn't present—but it doesn't



"And on our right was a largish old-fashioned house standing flush with the road-side"

need any stretching. It is an experience which Bernard and I shared together five years ago come next October, and we don't want to share such another.

Bernard and I were juniors in the same firm, and you know what happens to juniors in the matter of holidays. They have to take their holidays outside the holiday season. We were told to take our fortnight in October.

We didn't mind in the least, in fact we were rather glad. Our tastes were very similar. We didn't want to lie on our backs on the shingle of some tripper-haunted beach in August. We both liked walking, but there is not so much fun in walking when you are sweating and swallowing dust all the time.

October is a lovely month, with the red and yellow leaves above and on the ground. There is plenty of sun, for the weather is generally fine, and a nip in the air which lends a zest to taking exercise. There is very little chance of reaching a small place where you intend to stay the night and finding yourself crowded out. The people one encounters are pleased to see strangers and have more time to talk to them.

We began saving up for our holiday months in advance. Our intention was to cross France and walk in the Basque country. But you know how it is with very young men who are earning their own livings, and not very good livings at that. All sorts of unforeseen necessities made a run on the bank. One is always being compelled to buy shoes, socks, hats, and underclothes. Poor old Bernard had to make a series of painful and expensive visits to his dentist. And sometimes we couldn't resist the temptation to go up West for a dinner and a show.

Thus the holiday fund became so depleted, that by September it might almost be said that we had an overdraft on it. For that year, at least, the Basques would be

denied the honour of a visit from us. Foreign travel was out of the question. But there was England left. There is always England for the poor, thank God!

We argued about where we should go. We both loved the west and had no call to Wales or to the north. The east is inclined to become a little too bleak in October. We had "done" Cornwall twice and Devon once. Devon would have borne a second visit, but it is no county for poor travellers. In Devon nowadays, or at the time of which I write, the innkeeper or any other lessor of lodgings stingeth like an adder. Gone are the days when you could walk into the humble way-side cottage and have tea, saffron cake, bread and butter, jam and cream, and the good housewife looked ashamed of charging you sixpence. Nowadays they wait for you very much in the spirit of bandits about to ambush a traveller laden with rich merchandise.

And then we thought of Dorsetshire, that county in which so many names of places are poems. We had only been through it in the train. We had never walked it. We had read Thomas Hardy, but could not take quite such a gloomy view of his own county as he did himself. Surely in this county of lovely names there must be something besides adultery, suicide, and assassination as side-lines to the farming industry. Besides, Dorsetshire is not such a tourists' county as the ones farther west. So we decided on Dorset.

So one bright October evening saw us leave the train at Dorchester, close by where Thomas Hardy was then living. We stayed the night and walked next day the fifteen miles into Bridport, over the heath, which seems endless when you are on foot. We had no plans, but we realized that if we walked on, clinging to the coast, we should soon be in Devon, whereas we were sworn to "discover" Dorsetshire. So we looked at a map and turned north towards the little villages with lovely names. And we zig-zagged about, choosing our route each morning, turning now east, now south again, and now north-east.

I think it was on the fifth evening of our tour that the thing happened which has set me writing. We had been taking it easy because I had a sore heel, and we were making for a small town called Ludding Hillow. At night we preferred staying in towns to villages, for in towns there are generally hotels—mostly unlicensed—which cater for commercial travellers of the poorer sort. In these you see the commercial traveller in his carpet slippers eating fried plaice. He knows what he wants and he gets it, and he sees to it that he pays the least possible. These places were therefore much more comfortable and cheaper than the average village inn, where no flight of fancy in the matter of food rises above eggs and bacon, and where they need no lessons in how to charge for board and bed. If we had not to look at every penny we spent we certainly had to look at every shilling.

Well, Ludding Hillow was not for us that night. After the early dusk had fallen we were five miles short of our destination and had reached the village of Changton Margery. What a name! Who christened it and turned

a double row of lime-washed cottages into a song? To me the name smelt of wallflowers. I was young and romantic. Perhaps the Golden Girl predestined for me dwelt here. Could anybody resist a girl who came from a place with a name like Changton Margery?

However, it was not romance, but some unromantic blisters, which made me suggest to Bernard that we should stay there the night if we could find reasonable and comfortable quarters. He agreed out of pity for my blisters. There was one inn of fair size, and it was called the "Rose in June."

We entered a large tap-room where half the village seemed to be playing darts and the other half were engaged in shove-ha'penny, and ordered pints of beer. While we were being served we tactfully asked the landlord how much it would cost for supper, bed, and breakfast, because we might possibly want to stay the night in the village instead of pushing on. The landlord said 10s. a head.

This may not seem a lot to those who stay at good hotels, pay half a guinea for their dinner, a guinea for their room, and 4s. 6d. for their breakfast. But believe me it was a lot for impoverished youngsters like ourselves. Bernard gave me a glance out of the corner of an eye.

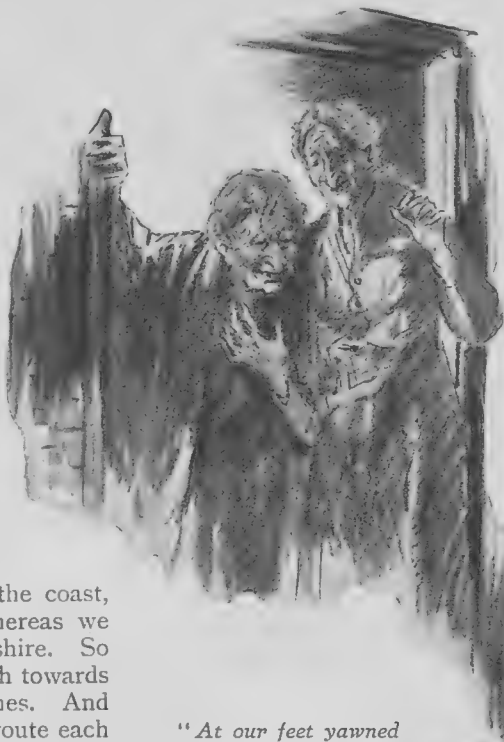
"Well, we'll tell you later," he said, turning to the landlord. "It just depends on whether we feel like pushing on or not."

When the landlord had moved away to serve other customers Bernard turned to me and asked how was my heel.

"Pretty rotten, thanks," I answered. "I'll sell it to you cheap if you like."

"No, I was thinking like this. It would be rotten to ask you to crawl into Ludding Hillow to-night. But there might be another place in this village. Do you

(Continued on p. 62)



"At our feet yawned an open well"



Stories from Everywhere



Fair Novice: That's funny, I do that playing golf too!

THE two following yarns are taken from that excellent little book of stories, "Over the Cocktails," by R. J. B. Sellar:

"An officer in India, having gone on short leave, left his polo ponies in charge of an Indian groom, who had instructions to report any unusual happening. A few days later the officer received this letter:

"Honoured Sir,—The little horse, Scamp, which you left in my charge, has developed a devil-may-care attitude. He entirely alluded my company yesterday, and has gone right away out of sight. My God, how annoying!"

"Two French sportsmen were making a short sojourn in this country. One day one of them returned to his hotel in a state of wild excitement. 'Henri,' he exploded to his friend, 'I have this day backed 5,000 francs upon a wonder animal who will certainly win the 2.30.'

"'Tiens,' gasped Henri, 'how did you come to hear of him?'

"As I walked along Piccadilly, Henri, I encountered a curiously-attired gentleman, who offered to give me the dead snip for one bob. I gave him the bob and he gave me the horse. Can you credit it? This beautiful beast has twice won the Derby, also the Grand National, and several Test Matches."

A certain man was forced by his wife to give up backing horses, but continued in secret. One evening an old friend, unaware of the prohibition, dropped in and said to the punter: "Well, did you have any luck with Jeanette yesterday?"

The wife gave her husband an ugly look and went out of the room.

"That's done it," groaned the husband. "My wife thinks I don't bet now. You'll have to square this with her."

In a few moments, when the wife returned, the friend said breezily: "I say, Mrs. Smith, I'm awfully sorry if I misled you just now. Jeanette isn't a horse, you know. She's a bar-maid."

"Dad," asked Peter, who was nine years old, "why can't we see the other side of the moon?"

It happened to be the twentieth question he had asked in the last hour. His father put down his paper and shouted angrily:

"What a boy you are for asking questions!" he snapped. "I would like to know what would have happened to me if I had asked as many questions as you when I was a boy."

"Perhaps you would have been able to answer a few of mine now," said Peter.

A man was locked up for being excessively merry in Trafalgar Square late at night. According to the police evidence, the accused had suddenly, for no apparent reason, flung his walking-stick into the basin of one of the fountains.

"But I do not see how that proves that the man was drunk," remarked the magistrate. "It might have been eccentricity on his part, you know."

The constable agreed, but went on to explain that the prisoner then proceeded to pat one of the lions on the head, and shouted: "Good dog! Fetch it!"



First Tramp: What you doin'?

Second Tramp: The doctor told me to take a bath, so I'm accustoming myself to it



"TO LET, FURNISHED, CHRISTMAS
WEEK ONLY."

By Inder Burns



Cecil
ALDIN

ON TRUST!

By Cecil Aldin



PAID FOR!

By Cecil Aldin



By Ernest Baker

WHAT MIGHT HAVE HAPPENED



... "Never to reveal that a
marriage has taken place . . ."

By MRS. BELLOC LOWNDES

Illustrated by SPURRIER

HE: In spite of the Court of Appeal having quashed the conviction of John Bosely for murder, the killing of that woman remains an impenetrable mystery.

SHE: I can think of two or three ways in which it might have happened!

I.

"Jane? I feel frightened."

Though the lovely little face of the speaker had on it a tremulous smile which denied the truth of the four words, the voice in which they had been uttered had even so been threaded with an authentic touch of fear.

"There's still time to draw back, Maggie——"

"Why, he'd kill himself!"

"More likely kill you," came the quick answer.

Two girls, one looking little more than a child, were facing one another at half-past one o'clock on the Saturday before the August Bank Holiday of 1893; and in a very few minutes from now Maggie O'Farrell was to marry her masterful lover, David Sotril, in a church hard by the pleasant old-fashioned rooms in Southwark, where she had now lived for over a year with her friend, Jane Smith. Maggie was seventeen. She looked younger than her age, and was beautiful. Jane was twenty-two, and looked older. She was by no means ill-looking, but compared to her friend she appeared as a pink-tipped daisy to a wild rose.

"You're not in love with Dave," she said slowly. "You don't know what love is."

"I like that! You think you've a corner in love—thanks to stodgy John Bosely," cried little Maggie gaily.

Jane Smith flushed—a deep unbecoming flush. "Leave me out of it," she cried sharply. "We're talking of you now, and time's running short."

She glanced at the clock. "You don't really want to be Maggie Sotril instead of Maggie O'Farrell—now do you?" And then, foolishly, she added, "Sotril? What a name!"

"It's unusual—that's all," said Maggie defensively. "It's your John says he won't be surprised to see Dave end up a millionaire, as he's such a wonder at figures."

She giggled. "Twould be fun—being married to a millionaire."

"It'll be a long time before Dave Sotril is a millionaire," said Jane. Her nerves were frayed, and in that acting against her nature, which was kind, she added, "And long before he's a millionaire he'll have tired of you."

"You *are* horrid," and tears welled up into the violet-blue eyes.

Jane rushed over to where the other girl stood by the window of the sitting-room they had shared so happily, and put her arms round her friend. "I oughtn't to have said that," she murmured remorsefully. "I don't believe anyone could help going on loving you, dear. But Dave Sotril frightens me at times. Besides——"

"Besides what?"

"I don't see why Dave's so set on keeping your marriage secret? Why, he won't even let me tell John."

"He'd lose his job at the bank in a minute if it got found out," cried Maggie.

"I wonder if he would? John told me yesterday that already the manager has picked Dave out for special work."

Maggie O'Farrell went on staring with unseeing eyes at the spire of the old church where her marriage was about to take place, and there came a strong feeling over Jane Smith that she must do something, *anything*, to prevent or at any rate postpone the wedding. She had dreamt the night before that her own dead mother had come back and whispered in her ear, "Stop it, Jenny. Stop it!"

"Dave's so hard," she said slowly. "I wish you'd told him you're not really an orphan."

"You'd have had me tell him that mother's in an asylum? I can't think what makes you so unkind today." And again the resentful tears welled up. "As he

(Continued overleaf)

won't let me say I'm married, my not telling him about mother is just tit for tat!"

She gave a wild, hysterical laugh, and Jane looked at her anxiously. Maggie had a happy, lightsome nature, yet at times there was something about her queer and unrestrained; in those days folk called it being "hysterical."

"Then you're really set upon it," said Jane Smith heavily.

"Of course I'm set upon it, though not so much as Dave is," and Maggie giggled again.

It was a hot, airless day, and the older girl wore a brown holland coat and skirt, with a pale blue linen shirt and a plain sailor hat bound with a blue riband. The bride's dress was of white dotted muslin, and on her piled-up golden hair was balanced one of the coloured coarse-straw hats which were then a great novelty. The hat was deep violet in tint, with a wreath of pale blush roses round the crown.

"There now!" exclaimed their kindly landlady, as they passed by her downstairs in the passage. "I do declare you're as pretty as a picture, Miss O'Farrell." She turned to the other girl. "Don't you be letting her out o' your sight—or someone'll be kidnapping of 'er!"

There were seventeen couples waiting to be married that morning, and as the two friends stepped into the cool church, more than one of the other bridegrooms there gave beautiful Maggie O'Farrell a good long stare.

Dave Sotril, power written on every inch of his young spare sinewy figure, and strong secretive face, came quickly forward from behind a pillar and grasped his little love's hot hand. "I've been waiting such a time. I nearly came after you—"

His smouldering eyes were devouring his future wife. And yet even while they devoured her in a gloating, possessive way that repelled Maggie's friend, he was wondering within himself whether he was not being a fool after all? It was the first time that he had ever done anything that might possibly cause a check to his ambitious plans; for he was acutely aware that if his marriage were discovered, he would be pitilessly dismissed from the bank where already his unusual gifts were being turned to account.

Characteristically, he had arranged that his and Maggie's should be the first marriage celebrated. So it was with real dignity that the couple walked up the aisle; and the celebrant saw to it that there should be no unseemly gabbling over the solemn words that were to bind these two young folks till death them did part. The bridegroom's "I will" rang out manfully; but not even Jane Smith, standing close behind her, caught the slender bride's whisper.

All three walked back to Jane and Maggie's lodgings—still to be Maggie's home after her week-end honeymoon—just to pick up the newly-made wife's luggage. But when in the sitting-room, after David Sotril had given her one fierce kiss, he seemed in no hurry to be gone. Suddenly he locked the door. Jane felt a slight thrill of fear as well as of surprise. What had made him do such a thing as that?

He came back to where she stood. "Have you got a Bible?" he asked abruptly.

"Of course I have."

"Bring it here!"

She went off into the back room, and brought back a big old Bible on the blank pages of which her forbears had inscribed many a birth and death.

"Repeat after me—I swear—before God—never to reveal that a marriage has taken place between Margaret O'Farrell and David Sotril."

Unwillingly Jane repeated the fateful words. Then, "You needn't have made me do that, Dave. My word is as good as my oath," she said coldly.

He was beckoning imperiously to his wife. "Maggie, attend to me!"

And then, she too, with her little hand laid on the Bible, repeated after him the words—"I swear before God

never to reveal my marriage to David Sotril till he has given me leave to do so."

Taking up Maggie's heavy little leather trunk as if it were a feather, and before Jane Smith could even say goodbye to her friend, he rushed his bride downstairs and hoisted her up into the smart hansom-cab he had arranged should come at that precise moment to take them to Victoria Station.

II

Here and there may be found a woman whose married life has been not only apparently, but in reality, curiously and happily uneventful. Such had been the case concerning Jane Bosely, formerly Jane Smith. What tremors and excitements had been hers had all occurred in her far-away girlhood—for the thirty odd years she had spent as the wife of John Bosely had been uneventful to an unusual degree, apart from the pregnant fact that the achievement of happiness in marriage constitutes in itself a remarkable event.

But even of that fact Mrs. Bosely was unaware, as she sat opposite her husband by the fire in their cosy sitting-room in a little house they had built for themselves ten years back in Meadowland, a then new suburb of the town of Northington.

John Bosely was now the valued head accountant of an important branch of the great London and New York Bank with which he had spent his whole working life; and he was also what we are often told is rarely met with, a really happy man. He loved his wife more dearly than he knew; and their one disappointment—lack of children—was no sorrow to him now that his paternal instinct was fully satisfied by a company of boy scouts. In fact, on this, a Saturday afternoon he was about to start for the gym, a generous local man had just presented to the local scouts.

He held an early afternoon paper in his hand, and looking up he smiled at his Jane. "I expect you remember the chap called David Sotril, who was so gone on poor little Maggie? He was in the bank just about the time I left for those two years I spent in Bombay."

She looked away from him, into the fire. "Of course I remember Dave Sotril."

"I always said he'd end up as a millionaire."

"I know you did, love," and turning, she smiled back at him.

"Well, he's made and lost more than one million since then. Tampered with his funny name, too. And become Sir David. But he had such a financial smash a month ago that 'twas quite on the cards he'd be arrested. But now—?"

He burst into laughter; handed the paper he had been reading over to her, and pointed to the second paragraph in the column headed "London Gossip." "—He's cajoled the richest woman in England to marry him!"

I hear on good authority that Sir David Sautrelle's engagement to Mrs. Janus Mack, the widow of the wealthiest squatter Australia has ever produced, will be announced within the next few days.

Mrs. Bosely read the paragraph twice over slowly. Then she let the paper slip from her hand, and there came over her placid pleasant face a look of distress, and yes, of astonishment.

She had a high sense of that old-fashioned virtue, duty, and now she was wondering where her duty lay. Unfortunately she could not ask her dear, kind, clever John for advice, for the sudden, anxious, self-questioning which filled her mind concerned a matter she had sworn solemnly to keep secret—and she had kept her oath.

She glanced up at the clock which had been her husband's gift years ago, on their silver wedding day. It was only half-past three, so she had plenty of time left before post-time to come to a decision.

He got up. "Though I hate leaving the fire—and you—I must be off now, Jane." He lingered a moment.

"Life's a queer thing—isn't it? I used to think Sotril would marry that girl. Lucky for him he didn't, eh?"

She went with him into the hall, and helped him on with his greatcoat. Then she stood for a minute or two in the cold by the front door, watching her husband walk away briskly down the broad, lonely road.

Sunnyside had been one of the first houses built there, and it was the only house completely detached—at the end of a row. But the Boselys were glad of that, for they kept themselves to themselves, being completely satisfied the one with the other.

It was with a heavy heart that Mrs. Bosely went back into her sitting-room and, sitting down, read the paragraph concerning Sir David Sautrelle for yet a third time.

Events in which she had played a part and had not thought of—in a vivid sense—for years, came crowding back on her.

Once more she lived through a certain hour in the early afternoon of the August bank holiday Saturday in 1893—when had taken place a wedding in an old church since pulled down. She re-lived, also, those few minutes in the panelled sitting-room when she had sworn on her own Bible never to reveal the marriage which had just taken place.

There came a deep flush over her still, smooth face as yet other scenes connected with that time of her life sprang into being again. She recalled, as if that painful, to her degrading, episode had just occurred, how after she had wrested from Dave Sotril permission to tell their landlady that Maggie was married, the woman had evidently not believed her.

And that had only been the first of a series of untoward happenings! Oh! how glad she had been then that

the man she loved, John Bosely, was in Bombay, helping to start a branch of the bank there, and so had known nothing of what she was now remembering.

She saw herself, as in a panorama, moving with Maggie to a tiny house at Ealing—Maggie, now known as Mrs. Jones, happily making little clothes for her coming baby; Dave Sotril coming to see them when he could, which was not as often, or so the Jane Smith of that day had thought, as he should; for even by then he had tired of poor little Maggie.

There crowded on her darker memories, and reluctant tears rose to Mrs. Bosely's eyes as she recalled every detail of what had been at the time a most piteous tragedy, though even then she had thought, deep in her heart, that it might be all for the best.

John's return from India had been followed at once by her own marriage, and, but for one circumstance, that secret, and finally tragic, past, might well have been forgotten. This circumstance was that once each year she forced herself to leave her happy home, to go off to a certain sad place near London, there to see an old friend who, thank God, always seemed happy. The more happy, inasmuch as the owner of that sad place had had the kindness to inform Maggie's one visitor, many, many years ago, that a considerable sum of money had been mysteriously provided, and sunk in an annuity which provided Mrs. Jones with every comfort.

Once more Jane Bosely took up the evening paper, and then she noticed something that her John had missed. In another column was an account of Sir David Sautrelle's beautiful house in Park Lane which was now, it appeared, for sale.

Having noted the number of that house in her mind, she went across to the table which filled up the bow



'But was she quite dead?'

window and wrote as follows, on a piece of headed notepaper:

Mrs. Jane Bosely, formerly Jane Smith, would like to see Sir David Sautrelle on a matter of business. As she wishes to see him in private, it would be well for him to come either at eleven some morning, or at four any afternoon but Saturday. She would like him to send word what day he is likely to come, for her husband knows nothing of the matter in question.

(Continued overleaf)

At the end of four days she received, typewritten on a piece of plain paper, an answer:

I will be with you at four o'clock next Wednesday. Should we be interrupted during our conversation, please address me as "Mr. Jones."

III

The intervening days went all too quickly by, and, on the afternoon she was expecting the man she knew was obeying what had amounted to a command on her part, Mrs. Bosely began to feel not only anxious, but wretched, too. She was one of those women who shrink from giving pain and causing trouble, and she feared she was going to cause both pain and trouble to one who, whatever his peculiarities, had behaved, when fortune had smiled on him, as she had not thought he would do.

At last she heard the sound of footsteps outside the house. Quickly she went to the front door, for if the steps she heard were those of the visitor she was expecting, it might not be easy for him, in the deepening twilight, to find Sunnyside. So as a man's tall figure loomed up just opposite the gate, she just breathed the name, "Dave!"

The figure stopped and became rigid, for Sir David Sautrelle, on hearing that whispered name, had felt as if an electric shock had gone through him.

Dave? No one had called him "Dave" for over thirty years. And yet during that long intervening period he had loved three women, and each of the three had loved him, for he had possessed, nay, he still possessed—had he not proved it within the last few days?—the dangerous gift of masculine fascination.

Not till he stood in the brightly-lighted passage, with the front door shut behind him, did he speak, and then only to say, "Well, Jane? It's a long time, isn't it?" And, "Yes, it is," was all she could find to answer, and in a strangled voice.

They had last met and parted in a tiny back room of a small cottage at Ealing; she had been crying bitterly then, and even he, the Dave Sotril of that distant day, had shown himself deeply distressed.

She was remembering that hour as she showed him into her sitting-room. And he? Always he had lived in the present. And he was doing so now.

Mrs. Bosely had not yet drawn the curtains, and the first thing her visitor did was to go across to the window

and pull them together. This action took his old friend aback, and also slightly offended her. Queerly it recalled what he had done on his marriage day, when he had gone and locked the door of what had been her living-room.

"Won't you take off your coat?" she asked rather coldly.

He hesitated a moment, then obeyed her. And her woman's eyes detected that the coat was a brand-new coat, of the sort bought at a cheap outfitter's. But under that shoddy-looking coat was the kind of suit that is made to measure by a tailor who is also an artist, and it made the wearer look years younger than he had done a minute or two ago.

"Well, Jane? What is it?"

He stood looking at her now; and in his strong, tired face she saw fear—and, alas! knew he had cause to be afraid.

"You'll have a cup of tea?"

He shook his head impatiently, "I'm in a hurry. In fact it wasn't easy for me to find time to come."

He waited the fraction of a minute. "Well, Jane, what is it?" he said again.

As she made no instant answer, he asked: "Can I do anything for you?"

"Oh, no!" The two words escaped her quickly.

Again there followed a pause, and then, staring down into the fire, Mrs. Bosely gasped out: "I feel you ought to know that Maggie is still alive."

"She was, till a short time ago," he said quietly. "But she's dead now, poor little thing."

"D'you mean she's just dead? I saw her seven weeks ago."

He felt the relief in her voice, and quickly he pursued his advantage.

"She died five weeks ago, Jane, on February the twenty-seventh."

His face remained grave, impassive, and his voice was quite steady. But inwardly he was shaking with a terrible sense of anger and dismay. He was astounded to learn that the woman now by his side had kept in close touch with his wife—his wife who had been mad for over thirty years.

Already he was asking himself if he had been wise to tell a lie that was bound to be at once found out, if she made it her business to make sure that what he had just said was true.

He sat down, heavily. "I'll have a cup of your good tea, after all, Jane. Your tea was always good."

She took the kettle off the hob, and went through her usual careful ritual of tea making. For a while he watched



Little Girl: And are you really ninety years old?

Ancient: Yes, Missy, ninety-three years I be

Little Girl: Oo-oh! Haven't you been a long time teething!

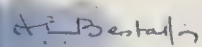


What cheer?
Good cheer,
 Xmas here!

The best Christmas Pudding tastes better with Bird's Custard **HOT**. When cold and set, Bird's goes like clotted cream with Mince Pies and all Fruits.

BIRD'S CUSTARD

"Something to sing about."



By A. E. Bestall



*When old friends
get together*

NO FINER WHISKY GOES INTO ANY BOTTLE



"'I would like never to have another love affair with a man unless I meant to give him a child,' she said"

Leander Swam the Hellespont

By ARTHUR MILLS

THE charm of Louise lay not only in her eyes, which at night were like luminous pansies and in the morning green as jade; other women have eyes like that; nor was it entirely the perfect lines of her exquisitely graceful body; nor her adorable fair hair.

For Bassett the charm of Louise was the fragrance of her personality. "Fragrance" is the exact word. The personality of Louise was a subtle thing, like a perfume in the air of which one could not at first detect the source. Some might never have perceived it. A good many people in the hotel thought she was just a rather common little adventuress. Why "common" is hard to say, except that adventuresses are generally considered to be so.

How wrong those people in the hotel were! Louise was uncommon to a degree. Take, for instance, the remark she made to Bassett on the second evening that they sat together. They had been dancing, and that they had been instantly and dangerously attracted to one another each knew well. Moreover, the hotel they were in was set high up in invigorating alpine air: snow, shining crystal clear in the sunlight, lay deep upon the mountains; they were surrounded by sun-tanned people enjoying life to the full; the atmosphere was electrical, and it hardly needed the magnetic contrast of Louise, fair as a primrose with satin

white cool skin, and Bassett, dark, well built, and hard as nails, to precipitate them into each other's arms.

They were on the verge of this when Louise made the remark that arrested the whole affair.

"I would like never to have another love affair with a man unless I meant to give him a child," she said.

"There's a lot in that," Bassett agreed, and then he looked at her and thought she would make a fine mother.

After this they began to tell one another about themselves. Louise's husband was in China and likely to remain there until he drank himself to death, which from all accounts would not be long. In the meanwhile he declined to divorce her, though she had long ago left him, utterly sick of the life he had made her lead. She had since accepted the companionship and attentions of other men. She told Bassett that she could not stand loneliness all the time and must have a little love.

Bassett said that he had never married. Without going into details he gave Louise to understand that he had been pretty badly treated by a woman of his own class. Since then he had preferred the company of women who were not received in society.

"Cocottes you mean," said Louise.

"Yes, like you I don't care to live alone all the time, and one knows where one is with that sort."

"I suppose you do." Louise held her head a little to one side, her eyes twinkling impishly.

"Of course it would be rather wonderful to have a kid," said Bassett.

They sat on talking for a while, then danced once more. Louise seemed this time to Bassett to melt into his arms; the perfume of her hair was in his nostrils; her eyes were like the proverbial stars when she raised her face and looked up at him—very beautiful and very bright, and yet far away. He felt that about her now—that she was a long, long distance from him. It was, of course, that thing that she had said about giving a man a child. It fixed such an immeasurable gulf between love and passion. At that moment he could have wished himself anything but what he was—an ordinary man with the ordinary man's feelings and impulses. She attracted him so much; now she had given him a chance not to spoil things; it was going to be devilish hard.

"I think I'll go up to bed now," she said, as the tune ended, and they remained standing together an instant, his arm still round her, his other hand holding her soft cool fingers.

"All right, my dear, I'll come with you to the lift. What floor are you on?"

"The third; I have got the room at the end, it is rather glorious—one window looks out over Mont Blanc and, in the morning when I wake, I can see the sunlight when it first comes on to the top of the highest snow. Everything is so still; just the chimes of the church clock in the village. Then the sunlight spreads to the other peaks." She stopped abruptly, laughed, and held out her hand. "I must get to bed. Good-night."

The page-boy stood by the door listening and watching. In his time he had seen all sorts of affairs begin and end in that hotel. Here was another, he thought, noting the look in the man's eyes. They were a well-matched pair; the page-boy liked to see people happy, and his smile, travelling quickly and deferentially from one to the other, was as propitious as he could make it.

When the lift doors closed on Louise, Bassett turned to go back to the table where they had been sitting. As he passed through the lounge people nudged one another and looked at him. He was known by sight to everybody.

"That is Victor Bassett," a father told his daughter. "He is one of the best ski jumpers in the world. You will see him at the Grand Tremplin to-morrow. It is a wonderful sight to see them at it."

"How far do they jump?"

"I believe Bassett has done 70 metres; it is not the record, but it is the longest any Englishman has ever jumped. Just think of it—70 metres—210 ft. That is a long distance for a man to be in the air all the time."

"Isn't it very dangerous?"

"Not for those who know how to do it. Anyone who made a mistake might break his neck. A fellow did break both legs here a week or two ago."

The various pairs of eyes that followed Bassett were all filled with admiration. There was the man that was going to take risks for their entertainment to-morrow when he attempted the record ski jump at the Grand Tremplin. What a fine athlete he looked!

Bassett's thoughts were far away from the Olympic Games and the tremendous leap that thousands would watch him make next day. Mind and body, he knew himself to be permeated by the personality of Louise.

When he reached the place where they had been sitting he saw she had left her bag on the table. It was a plain black silk bag with a monogram in diamonds, and looked to be stuffed to capacity. A woman's bag being the one thing to which she will cling under almost any circumstances, Bassett expected Louise to come back to fetch it. When half an hour passed without any sign of her he picked up the bag

and decided to leave it at her door. That would be better than asking the concierge to take care of it, for Heaven knew what might be inside that bag. Luckily she had told him where her room was.

"Third floor," Bassett said to the lift boy, who would otherwise have taken him to the fifth.

"Bien, monsieur," answered the latter, brightening visibly; he had had a monotonous evening so far.

"Bonne nuit, monsieur," said the lift boy as they reached the third floor and Bassett got out, turned right-handed, and walked along the corridor. (Continued overleaf)



"Then Louise gently pushed him from her. . . . 'What damn fools you men are to prefer cocottes!' she said"



"Louise, lying there, watched that figure come soaring through the air"

He came to the end where Louise had said her room was, and knocked on the outer door.

"Entrez," called Louise.

"It is me," he said, opening the outer door and standing by the second. "I have brought your bag up; you left it on the table. Shall I put it down outside?"

"Wait a minute."

Bassett waited; he imagined rather than heard the soft scuffle of a garment being put on, and then the door opened and Louise appeared, a kimono thrown over her pyjamas. She could see at once in his eyes how beautiful he thought her as he held out the bag.

"Thanks very much," said Louise taking the bag.

Bassett was too mesmerized to go; he stretched out his arm, his hand met hers, seized it, and drew her towards him. She came into his arms unresistingly, her face lifted. He kissed her; for a long minute they clung together, enslaved by one another. Then Louise gently pushed him from her and he saw the twinkle that he knew come into her eyes.

"What damn fools you men are to prefer cocottes!" she said.

He remembered what he had said to her earlier in the evening about the sort of women he liked when he felt he needed the society of women at all. Standing there in all her loveliness, her remark amounted to a taunt; for she knew she had fired him as no cocotte could ever do, perhaps no other woman.

There was only one answer to be made.

"Not than you," he said, trying to take her in his arms.

She evaded him.

"Louise, you have let me kiss you once; let me kiss you again; you must."

"Not now, my dear. I am not ready for you yet."

Then Bassett made his hideous blunder. He should have listened more carefully to her words; but they were in mountain air; they had danced together, and he had kissed her. He remembered only that he was a man, and forgot that women like the men that love them to show themselves capable of gentleness. He made a grab at her, caught her, and crushed her to him.

She pushed him away violently.

"Good-night," she said and closed the door.

He did not sleep well; he lay awake for hours with Louise's face in front of his eyes and the magnetism of her galvanizing his whole being; also his conscience caused him acute discomfort, for he knew he had not been too clever. That had not been the way to win a girl like Louise. He might very easily have lost her, he was not sure if he had; in the morning he would know.

When they met next day in the lounge both were in their ski-ing clothes. Bassett was due at the Grand Tremplin at half-past eleven to make his attempt on the record.

Louise looked charming; a blue and grey jersey tucked into her thick serge ski-ing trousers was matched by blue and grey socks turned down over her serviceable heavy boots. She greeted him coolly and without embarrassment.

Bassett at once played the best card he had. He was the star man of the place that day; hundreds were coming down to the Grand Tremplin to see him make his attempt on the record; the hotel had put a sleigh at his disposal.

"May I give you a lift down to Les Bossons?" he asked Louise. "I have got a sleigh outside."

"That is awfully sweet of you, but Captain Harper kindly offered to take me, and I said I would go with him."

Bassett was not too pleased. Dick Harper was a young soldier staying in the same hotel; he also had been hovering as close to Louise as he could get for the last two days. He was a novice at winter sports, but from the look of him Bassett did not doubt that he could make himself attractive to women. So Dick Harper was the man who was to have the honour of taking Louise down to see him risk breaking his neck!

"Will you come and have tea at the Casino this afternoon?"

(Continued on p. 57)



THE SONG OF LIU

By Tremator



THE LADY WHO ASKED

By H. M. D.

A limited number of specially printed and mounted copies of the above picture can be obtained from the office.



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THE SEA KING'S DAUGHTER

By H. J. Haley

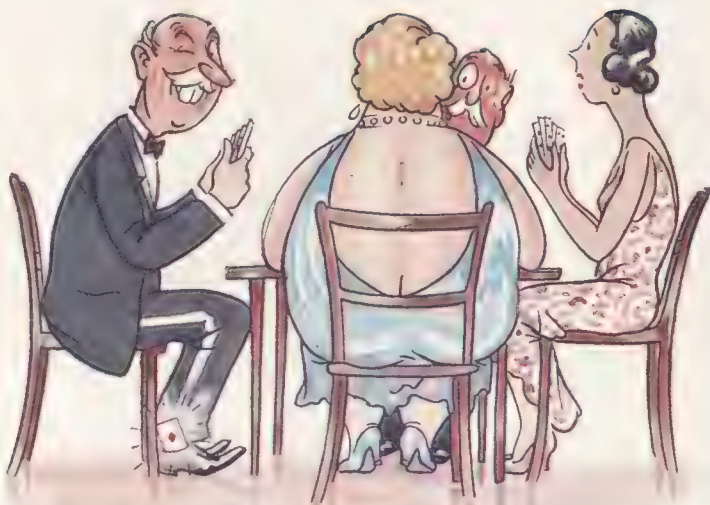
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POKER HANDS ILLUSTRATED—I



THE ACE



ONE PAIR



TWO PAIRS



THREE OF A KIND



A SEQUENCE

P. BELLEW.

By Patrick Bellew

POKER HANDS ILLUSTRATED—II



A FLUSH



A FULL HOUSE



FOURS



P. BELLEW.

FIVES



A ROYAL STRAIGHT FLUSH

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THE CAT BURGLAR

By Jeri Cochrane



"Go Home Sir"!



"Go Home Sir"!!



"Go Home Sir"!!!



"Go Home Sir"!!!!



"Go Home Sir"!

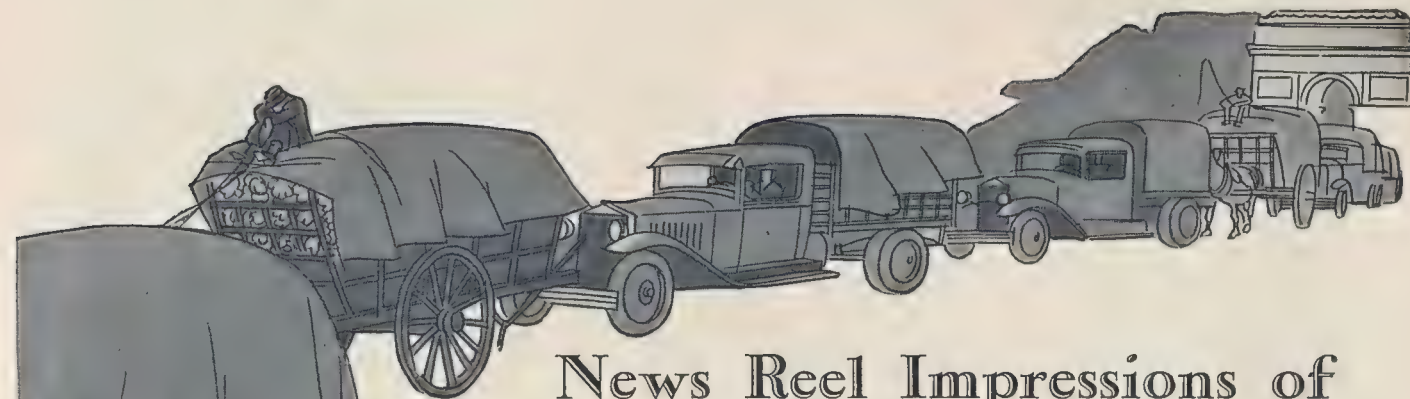


!

Arthur Watts
31

THE DEAF DOG NEXT DOOR

By Arthur Watts



News Reel Impressions of a Paris Christmas

By MEG VILLARS

CHRIST-
M A S
EVE in
Paris. It has
been told so often,
the old story and
the old contrasts.
The *réveillon* of
rich and poor.
The merry-
makers in
expensive
hotels and *cab-
arets de nuit*.
The familism
of those who
gather round a
tranquil table at
home. The pag-
eantry of
Midnight
Mass at the
Madeleine or No-
tre Dame where
one may book
some of the
seats as one
would book stalls
at the theatre.
The less fashion-
able and the
quieter suburban
churches where
the *crèche*, with
the waxen figures
of the Holy
Family, is as
worn and shabby
as a child's well-
used favourite

toy. The exodus, by *trains de luxe*, of the winter sports and sunshine-seeking crowds. The arrival of country folk, eager to "pass the fêtes" with their city relatives. The clip-clop of the plodding horses' hooves as they draw the market carts to the city, the carter fast asleep on the piles of vegetables well knowing that his animals are aware of the way to the Halles as well as he knows it himself.

Pictures everywhere. Plain and coloured. Capital letters splashing the pages of Christmas prose. Events flitting before one's vision in the manner of the News Reels of the picture-houses.

But this is the Christmas of the illustrated supplements. The Christmas we dream of but never really achieve. The Christmas that an optimistic memory believes that it recognizes since, quite unconsciously, we shape the Christmases of long ago to our desires.

The Christmas supplements are made up of those unremembered but so vividly imagined times, and that is why we pay our shillings for them so willingly; all the more so because they are published in November and catch us unawares. Were they to appear on Boxing Day it is probable that we should want our money back, and we should certainly not include the editor in our Tiny Tim-ish prayer.

But if the reality of Christmas—as a matter for rejoicing—fails us, there is one thing that never palls—its preparation. We are Pandora-like in keeping, at the bottom of the casket from which our illusions have flown, the eternal hope of a really happy Christmas and we prepare for it every year as if—this time *surely*—it will materialize.

Christmas preparations are both thrilling and romantic; and though a mere shopping list may bound the activities of most of us, there is a whole world, and under-world, that stir and become busy with the providing of those items that form our lists.

Have you ever heard of the mistletoe poachers? Well listen:

On the outskirts of Paris, within easy trudging distance of the city, the Meudon woods stand high on the sloping hill. At the summit, looking down between the stark branches of the chestnut trees, and through the wraiths of gathering mist one catches a glimpse of the sombre, ice-filmed waters of the Chaville lakes. Long streaks of primrose yellow, the afterglow of a fine December afternoon,



still smear the deep violet of the darkening sky, but the wind that sways the tree tops and rustles the dead leaves underfoot forecasts the bitter night to come. Faintly silhouetted along the branch of an old tree—a human figure. Crouched on the ground below a police dog, tense, watchful, and silent. To and fro, lashing backwards and forwards with angry strides, a wood-keeper, the bottle-green of his corduroys showing black against the swiftly-falling dusk, his face a white mask of rage against the blackness, his mastery of the lurid epithet rejoicing to a connoisseur. All his thwarted longing for the fireside evening he had planned, the simmering *pot-au-feu* that awaits his hunger, the extinction of his pipe, and the misfire of his last match goad him to exasperation and load his voice with indignant ferocity.

Five o'clock . . . six o'clock . . . the faint clangour of church bells rises from below announcing the Angelus. As if in answer to a pre-arranged signal, the immobile figure in the tree stirs at last and whimpers a little. The dog rears against the tree trunk, his panting breath gushing in white jets through the cold air. A sob from overhead, another, and yet another . . . an outburst of crying, a heart-rending explosion of all too long contained grief and terror. Between the sobs and gasps a few broken words. . . .

"Hold the dog, Monsieur, I descend!"

The dog safely muzzled and leashed, the sobbing creature in the tree scrambles and slides, slowly and stiffly, to earth collapsing, a shivering mass of misery and fear, almost at the keeper's feet. The man's dreams of violence and reprisals for his spoiled evening vanish; what can one do to a child—and a pretty girl child at that—overcome by terror who, in a pitiful gesture of restitution, guiltily tenders the absurdly small bunch of mistletoe that she still clasps in her half-frozen hand.

"Sacred little *imbécile*," he growls, "why didst thou not speak sooner?"

"I was frightened, Monsieur!" she murmurs humbly.

"One is not an ogre to devour children, *sacré nom d'un nom d'un nom*!"

He consoles her gruffly, makes certain that she knows her way home to the address she gives him and, reassured on that point, watches her trot away.

As soon as she is out of sight and hearing she swerves aside, taking the short cut that leads to Paris.

At the bottom of the hill she joins a youth who, trudging in the direction of the city, carries on his shoulder a pole from the two extremities of which hang great clumps of mistletoe that will sell for good money in the streets of the capital. He glances at the girl approvingly.

"Clean work," he exclaims. "I'll treat you to a *vin chaud* for this at the Porte d'Auteuil."

"And a *choucroute*?" asks the girl, woman-like making the most of her triumph.

"And a *choucroute*," concedes the youth and, putting his disengaged arm round the girl's slim shoulders, adds, with the generosity of the male who has successfully accomplished that which he had set out to do, "a *choucroute* GARNIE!"

But now that I have set this story down—the main facts were told me by the boy himself who was, I fear, a bit of a braggart—it seems to me almost too Christmas-Supplement-ish to be true.

With snow on the ground, a little crescent moon in the sky, frosty stars, louder church bells and coloured illustrations, it would really be quite moving . . . only, of course, I should have to leave out the *choucroute* as being unromantic, and that I should resent for it was I who paid for it, two portions and very much GARNIE, in the little café at Auteuil! You see . . . it was the price of the story.



A Few More Stories

A battalion of Yorkshire territorials were in camp on the East Coast, and one day a very recently-joined recruit strolled up to the colonel and said: "Hast tha seen owt of B company?"

The C.O. was staggered by this flagrant breach of discipline, and when he had found his breath he said furiously, "How dare you address me in this fashion? Don't you know that you ought to salute an officer and stand to attention while speaking to him?"

The recruit nodded affably: "Aye," he said, "but still, tha hasn't towld me if tha's seen owt of B company."

He was a furniture-remover's man, and his memory, as he cheerfully admitted, was "very convenient."

"No, I can't remember where Mr. Flit has taken his family and furniture."

"Come, now," said the debt-collector, "he hasn't been gone a week, and you drove the van."

"Did I?"

"You know you did."

"And it's only a week ago?"

"A week to-day."

"Funny how easily a man forgets."

The collector offered him a ten-shilling note.

"That ought to wake your memory," he remarked.

"It ought to," admitted the other, "but mine's no ordinary memory, and it takes a lot of waking. Why, it cost a pound to put it to sleep."

shoes. But for all his care, his wife stirred, and he was aware of a pair of sleepy eyes regarding him over the eiderdown.

"Oh, George," yawned his wife, "how early you are this morning!"

"Yes, dear," replied George, stifling a sigh, "I've got to go to Liverpool for the firm to-day."

And, replacing his shoes, he dragged his aching limbs out again into the heartless world.



"Mother says she could have soled her boots with that steak!"

"Well, why didn't she?"

"She could not get the nails through!"

A farmer sat in a railway carriage with a stranger. The train passed a field of sheep. "There are 124 sheep in that field," said the stranger.

"That was pretty quick," thought the farmer.

"There are eighty-seven sheep there," said the stranger again as they passed another field.

Still the farmer said nothing, but thought, "The next field is mine. I know how many sheep there are in it. I'll catch him there."

As they flashed by the stranger said, "There are 171 sheep in that field."

The farmer could keep silent no longer. "That's right," he said, "but how on earth do you know?"

"Oh, that's easy," explained the other. "I just count their legs and divide by four."

An Aberdonian had been invited to attend the funeral of a neighbour's third wife, and as

he had attended the funerals of the first two, his own wife was somewhat surprised when he informed her that he had declined the invitation. She continued to press for a reason, so at last after a great deal of hesitation he told her.

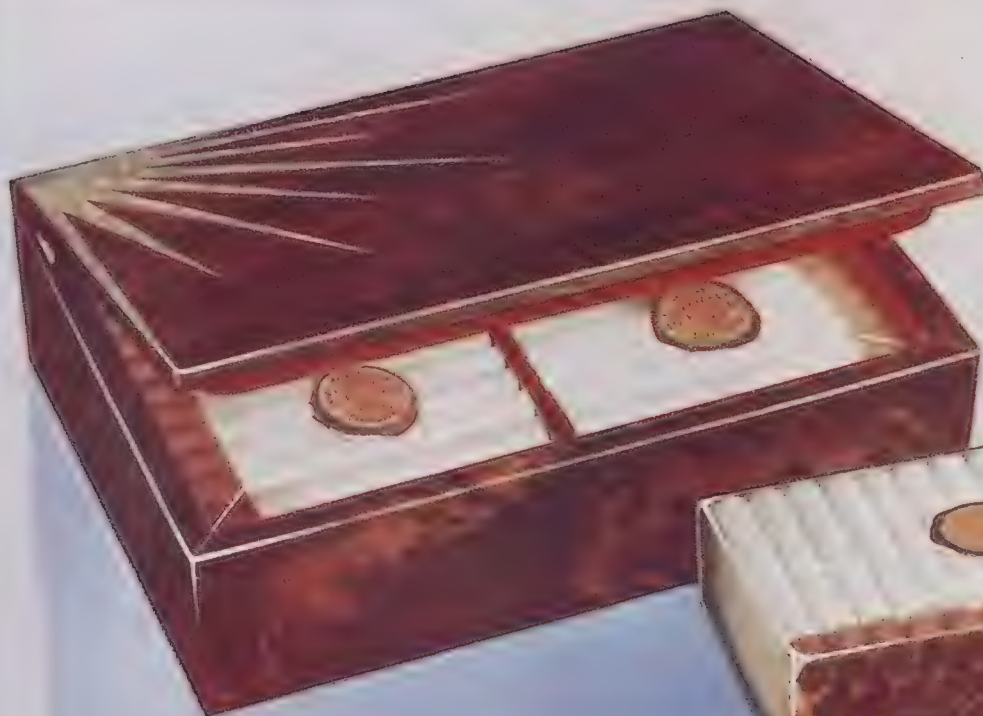
"Weel, Mary," he said, "I feel a bit awkward to be accepting Brown's civilities when I never have anything of the sort to ask him back to."

Afraid to breathe almost, the returned reveller crept quietly into his bed-room as dawn was breaking. Sitting on the edge of the bed, he cautiously took off his



"The Christmas Gift"

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"White Label"
WHISKY



THUJA design CASKET
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INFRINGEMENT OF COPYRIGHT

By Douglas Wales

FAIRIES IN THE BREAD

Illustrated by A. E. Bestall



Once in a dewy meadow-land the Fairies danced around,
All up and down the moon-beams where they glistened on the ground,
And here and there they danced throughout the lovely summer night,
Making the greeny Fairy-rings they leave before it's light.
The Fairy Queen was wondering where she'd take them next to play,
When the tiny Fairy Vita stepped in front of her to say:

"Oh, lovely Queen we've danced on all the
grass and made it green,
And we're rather tired of meadows where
perhaps we might be seen,
May we go and try a cornfield where the
stalks are oh, so high
That all of us could hide from every peeping
passer-by?"

The Queen then waved her wand and said "How clever, Vita dear,
That's a lovely little fancy and we'll do it every year,
When yellow grows the ear of corn we'll dance around the stem,
And we'll whisper to the children that we're doing it—for them."

And ever since, at autumn time, when wheat is turning gold,
You can hear the fairies whisp'ring in the fields as they were told,
And when harvesting is over and the wheat is turned to bread,
They find the loaves with tiny holes, and pop in there instead.

They hide there till the Children EAT their bread and set them free,
To dance again in cornfields growing ripe for you and me,
Where the Fairy Queen is calling to her tiny Columbine,
Who had thought about the cornfields, and she calls her "Vita Mine."

—PAUL ALEXANDER.



What Might Have Happened

(Continued from p. 28)

She looked across at him. "I read in a paper that you were going to be married," she answered.

"I may marry again in time," he said hesitatingly. "But I don't expect it will be to the lady about whom there has been some vulgar gossip in the papers—damn them! How queer that that stupid paragraph made you send me your mysterious letter."

"I couldn't have let a woman be deceived like that," she said slowly.

"D'you mean you'd have given me away?" He uttered the words lightly.

She bent her head, and he told himself, with a sensation of impotent rage, that conscience, which no longer plays much part in most human lives, would have made this—this commonplace woman he had not liked in the old days, and whom he felt he hated, now, wreck his life.

Again, inwardly, he shook with anger as well as with fear. But he was used to keeping his feelings not only under control, but hidden from those about him. And, as he began drinking the freshly-made tea, a plan became formulated in his mind. By the time he had emptied the cup and put it down, that plan had become complete, down to almost every detail.

"I must be going soon," he observed. "But I'd like to know just a little about you and your circumstances, Jane. What's Bosely doing now?"

"He's still with the L. and Y.—where you and he started at the same time," and she smiled. "He's now chief accountant in the head Northington branch."

"Have you any children?"

She shook her head. "No, and don't miss them now. John is tremendously keen on the boy-scouts. In fact, he'll be at their headquarters right on till eight to-night, I expect. We've got a great friend called Dusk, with whom John runs the scouts. But Robert Dusk is away, so John's busier than usual over those boys."

Mrs. Bosely's visitor got up. "I'd best be making myself scarce now, hadn't I?"

She got up, too. And then there came across her mind a feeling of doubt as to what he had told her.

"It was strange of Dr. Kingston not to have let me know about Maggie," she said hesitatingly.

"That was my fault," he spoke with a touch of penitence. "I got in personal touch with the man last year, and told him the truth, for I'd have married again long ago if she hadn't been there. Of course I would! I asked him to communicate with me, and me only, if—anything happened. My money had been keeping her, as, of course you must have guessed, for over twenty years."

her in silence. Then, suddenly, he asked a poignant question: "Why did you want to tell me you thought Maggie still alive?"

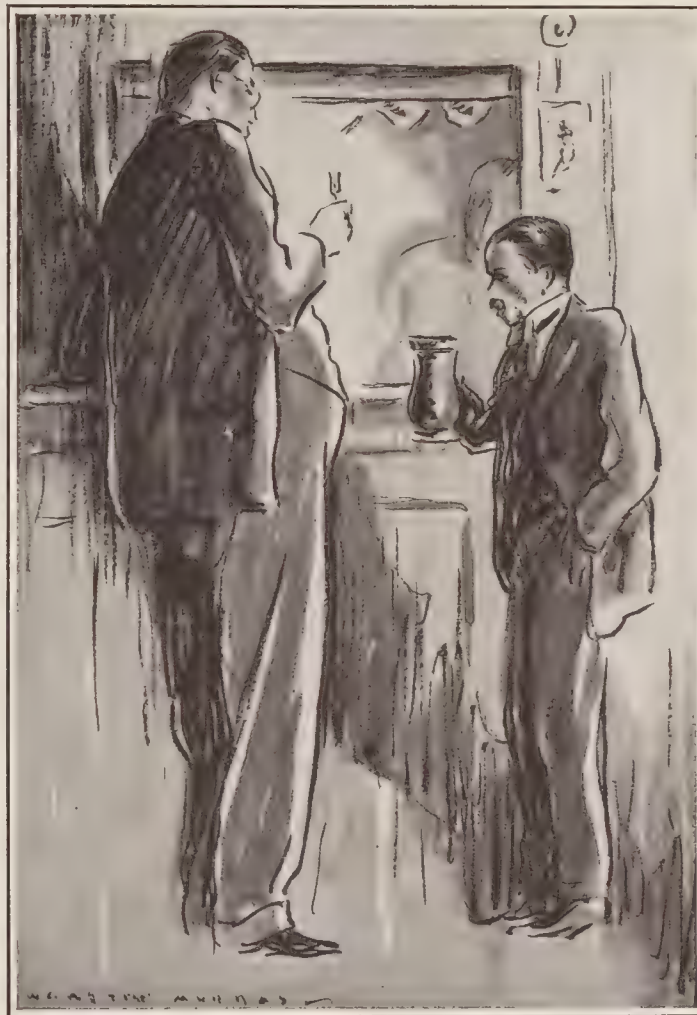
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"CHEERIO"

"It was very good of you to make such a generous arrangement," she said in a moved voice. "It made a great difference to the poor thing."

He put on his new coat, and she followed him into her little hall.

"Well, Jane? If we don't meet again—so long!"

He opened the front door and passed out, she thought, of her life for ever. But as to that she was mistaken, for at the end of less than a quarter of an hour—just time, as a matter of fact, to walk to the public telephone box that certain of her neighbours had badgered John Bosely into signing a petition might be erected there—he came back. "I forgot my umbrella!" he exclaimed, speaking as if he were out of breath. "As a matter of fact it has my name on it. My name and my address."

They went together into the sitting-room, and both of them began to look for the umbrella.

Jane Bosely peering into a corner near the door did not see her old friend first stoop and take up the heavy, old-fashioned poker, then conceal it beneath his coat, and take just two strides towards the place where she was bending a little forward . . .

Less than a full minute later Sir David Sautrelle stood staring at the reflection of himself in the looking-glass set in the mahogany sideboard which stood opposite the curtained bay window in that, to him, inexpressibly poor-looking and commonplace sitting-room.

It was with surprise that he saw he looked just as usual—with surprise and oh! with what unutterable relief that he missed on his face the brand of Cain.

Even so it was with an awful sensation of horror, that at last he turned round and stooped over the huddled-up figure lying prone on the floor.

Was Jane Bosely dead? To himself he said, "quite dead?" That to him was a vital question. There was a deep wound on her head in the place where he had struck her one ferocious blow. *But was she dead?*

Straightening himself, he edged his way out of the room, and went up the narrow, steep staircase to the dark landing above.

No electric light? How behind-hand was this famous provincial town!

With numb, shaking fingers he lit the gas, and went blindly into a front room which he knew must be the bedroom of the hapless pair. There he also lit the gas, and quickly took out the two top drawers of an old chest of drawers, and emptied their contents on to the floor.

Then he opened the drawer of the dressing-table. There lay in it two or three small trinkets, and these he slipped into one of his pockets, before hastening back on to the landing.

There was another door there, and it was ajar. God! supposing there were someone behind it—a young general servant maybe, sleeping her afternoon away?

(Continued overleaf)

He pushed the door open; then gave a gasp of relief. It was only the bathroom—how stupid of him not to have guessed that it was that!

And then all at once, it was as if something outside himself—something even more devilish than he now knew himself to be—instilled into his mind a suggestion of how he could make sure of Jane Bosely's death with no danger of discovery to himself.

Walking into the scrupulously clean if humble bathroom, he began undressing with feverish haste.

When stark naked, he looked down at his clothes, now heaped up on the one chair in the little room. Those clothes had been put out that morning by his valet, and the man had ventured to congratulate him on his engagement to Lady Mack. He had been pleased, even touched in his hard way, at the speaker's evident satisfaction at the happy turn in his master's fortune. That surely meant that he, Sir David Sautrelle, was a good master. Considerate, thoughtful, even generous. It is stupid to be anything else, as he well knew, in that peculiar, unnatural, relation, of master and man.

He went downstairs, feeling not only very strange, but also very cold.

In the hall he noticed that a mackintosh was hanging up. Slipping it on, and finding it hanging loosely on him, he remembered, in a hazy way, the then young Jane Smith's priggish lover—tall, thin John Bosely. To think those two had been married over thirty years—and happy? Yes, evidently very happy. He himself had not been happy in his relations with women, in fact, far from happy, from poor little Maggie onwards. But he was going to be happy, now, with clever, pleasant, popular, and above all, immensely rich, Alice Mack—if only he could get away with—with "this."

Slowly, indeed very, very slowly, he pushed open the door of the little sitting-room. How awful it would be to find his victim come to life again? But, once more to his exultant relief, the huddled-up figure lay just as he had left it a few minutes ago.

All the same, he had only been away ten minutes, if as long; and he was not the man to leave anything to which he put his hand, unfinished. So he threw off the mackintosh with a hasty movement, and saw it fall partly on the fire. But that didn't matter, one way or another, as John Bosely wouldn't be in for a couple of hours. So he finished, deliberately, what he had, maybe, only begun.

Once more he went up the narrow, steep staircase, and almost as incredibly quickly as he had undressed himself, he dressed himself again.

One thing still perturbed him. Would the police believe what had happened to be the work of a burglar? With this doubt in his mind, after going downstairs, he walked down a short passage leading to the kitchen, and opened wide a cupboard door.

Yes! This was better, for there stood a small silver teapot he remembered had belonged to the Jane Smith of long ago, and which had belonged, she had once told him, to her great-great-grandmother. It was a really good, valuable little piece. He knew about such things now. So he took it up, and hid it under his new coat.

But once out of doors panic surged upon him. Had he been a fool to take away that teapot? The sort of semi-amateur burglar of whom he was already building up an image in his own mind wanted money, money, money.

Stepping off the side-path, he walked up on to a piece of waste ground and, putting the small silver teapot carefully in a kind of little hollow, he covered it up with some of the stones and rubbish which lay about.

He had covered something like two miles before he got into a cross-country motor-bus linking Northington with Crawley-on-the-Edge, another town of much the same size but humbler standing.

There, after well washing his hands in the waiting-room, he caught a train back to London. A taxi dropped him in Grosvenor Square; and in one of the smaller, and now but dimly lighted streets, of Mayfair, he divested himself of his coat, and dropped it over into the area

belonging to a little shop. Then he hurried on till he reached his fine house in Park Lane, and letting himself in with his latchkey went quietly up to bed. He had left word he would be late and that no one was to sit up for him.

V

It was ten o'clock when John Bosely crept back to his desecrated home the next morning. His good kind friend, Mr. Wardell, the manager of the bank, had taken him to his own home for the night, after what had seemed hours and hours of close examination, and cross-examination, at the police headquarters of the town. And then, rejecting food, he had slept on, owing to a strong sleeping draught, till after his host had had to go to work; without having heard as to what he was going to do he had left the roof which had sheltered him, and walked right across the town, all the way home.

As he put his key in the lock of his front door it appeared, to himself, as if æons of time had gone by since he had left his wife, a little more than twenty-four hours ago, not only well, but looking so absolutely her happy, placid self.

The hall looked as usual. Not so the sitting-room into which he shudderingly entered. Every inch of it had been gone over last night, and finally the carpet and the fire-irons had been taken away for further examination. And yet there was no mystery to be solved, save that of discovering who had so foully and brutally done to death the good, kindly woman whose body now lay in the town mortuary, over near the river, awaiting the ministrations of a famous pathologist from London.

The long walk alone in the cold morning air had, in a way, cleared John Bosely's brain, and as he sank into the chair which stood on the bare-looking boarded floor by the grate now half full of ashes and half-burnt coal, he recalled what had happened yesterday.

First had come that foolish practical joke—the telephone message which had sent him on a wild goose chase to the still empty house of his absent friend, Robert Dusk. Then his return home, a good bit later than usual. Though the curtains were drawn, he had seen the light behind them, and he had hastened his steps, eager for the nice supper Jane would have ready, and also eager to tell her of that mysterious and really unkind, joke, that had been played on him.

Hazily he remembered having noticed that his mackintosh had gone from the peg on which it always hung. Though Jane would sometimes fling it over herself if anyone rang while she was upstairs changing her dress, always she put it back in its right place.

And then?

And then he had opened the door of the sitting-room and, stepping forward, had stumbled, in the dimly-lighted room, over his wife's body. Whoever had felled her to the ground had gone to some pains to straighten out that poor body. And her face looked so peaceful that he, John Bosely, who had only twice in his life seen death, had felt a passionate hope she might, even now, be still alive.

That was why he hadn't stayed more than a moment in his house before rushing to the nearest neighbour who he knew had a telephone, to send an S O S to three doctors in succession.

But before the first one had had time to arrive a police inspector, summoned by the owner of the 'phone as soon as John Bosely had gone home, motored up with a police surgeon, to whom a glance had been enough to pronounce Jane Bosely dead. Indeed, both the inspector and the police surgeon evidently thought it almost incredible that he, John Bosely, could have doubted that it was so even for the few moments he admitted—"admitted" had been their word—having been in the house after his awful discovery.

Yes, all that had happened here, last evening, was clearly remembered by him now, even to the way the inspector had badgered him—yes, badgered was the word—about that half-burnt mackintosh.

How could he explain how that old garment of his he seldom wore had come to be thrown, bloodstained, on the

(Continued on p. 56)



MICROPHONE CAROLS
The Directional or "Beam System"
By Edgar Spenceley

What Might Have Happened

(Continued from p. 54)

But then, as the inspector had pointed out, truly, why and by whom had it been flung on the fire? The obvious explanation was that Jane might have been wearing it when her murderer had rained blow after blow on her.

As to what had happened at the police station he had but a hazy recollection. He had been asked, it now seemed to him, hundreds of questions. Questions dealing with the whole of what had been, if a happy, such an uneventful, life. He had even been asked if he had made an enemy, or enemies, among the native population during the two years he had spent in India as a young man! But he could recollect nothing of the sort ever having happened to him. In fact, during that long interrogation he had been, as he had heard one of the men murmur to another, like a shell-shock case in the war.

Suddenly some word said as to his Jane's sweet nature had set him off crying like a child, and, just as if he were not there, one of his inquisitors had observed to the other, "Why, she was quite an elderly woman! Queer he should take on like that?" But there had come a feeling answer, "I'm not with you there. Me and my missus have been married nearer forty years than thirty, and if I found her as this poor chap says he found his wife, I expect I'd go on just as he's doing."

And now he was in this room, this desecrated room where he and Jane had spent such happy, happy hours ever since they had first walked proudly in here, knowing the house was at last their very own. He was glad they had paid off the mortgage, for that had given Jane such pleasure. He had teased her, saying that maybe she'd live there as a widow, and then he'd been oh! so touched, for her eyes had filled with tears, and she'd exclaimed, "I wish husbands and wives could die just at the same minute. Sometimes they do, and maybe we will."

Oh God! if only that could have been so yesterday, if only he had been here, to be killed while defending her, by her side.

He didn't know how long he had been there when he heard the key—Jane's key—turn in the lock and, looking round, saw the door of the sitting-room being pushed open.

"He's here after all! I always said he might be——"

And then the speaker of those strange words, a police sergeant, actually laughed—a triumphant laugh full of relief.

"Well, Mr. Bosely, you've led us a pretty dance! You oughtn't to have come here, you know. It's quite out of order!"

"I didn't know that," he muttered.

And then, behind the sergeant, he saw the anxious face of Mr. Wardell, and heard the question, "Whatever made you leave my house?" And all he could answer, lamely, was "I don't know."

The police sergeant left the room, and Mr. Wardell came forward, and grasped the shattered man's hand warmly. "They've found the teapot and the other little things you missed."

"Found them! Where?"

Not that he cared, but he remembered, now, that something had been said last night by Mr. Wardell about circularizing the pawnbrokers.

"They've been found within a few yards of here, on a piece of ground to let for building. Inexplicable, isn't it, Bosely?"

He echoed "Inexplicable."

"The police are so surprised that the man left the bit of jewellery which was good—I mean poor Mrs. Bosely's diamond brooch, as well as that nice ring you gave her last Christmas."

"Maybe they were left because she was wearing them," he said dully. After all, what did that sort of detail matter?

Then came a ring at the front door. The sitting-room door opened; and a Mr. Sparks, who was legal adviser to the Northington branch of the bank, came in.

John Bosely rose from his chair. Mr. Sparks was a good friend of his; in fact it was Mr. Sparks who had made it possible for them to build this house. So he straightened himself, with an instinctive wish not to give way. He knew, by personal experience, how difficult it is to sympathise, in any real sense, with the deep, measureless grief of another human being. Still, it was good of Mr. Sparks to spare an hour out of a busy life to come and see him like this.

But the solicitor, after a muttered word of sympathy, exclaimed, "Mr. Wardell! May I have a word with you?" and the two men left the room.

But they left the door ajar, and all at once, though he had no thought of eaves-dropping, the unhappy man heard what they were saying, in the passage outside.

"My dear Wardell, I agree with every word you say. You and I *know*, as you say, that the man's innocent. We know he's not the sort who would willingly drown a kitten, let alone kill a woman! But we've got to look at it as a jury will look at it—aye, and I'm afraid I must say, and a judge too."

"D'you think it will come to that?"

"Most certainly it will. Ask yourself how his story would look if you heard it of anyone you didn't know."

His story! Did Mr. Sparks mean his, John Bosely's, story? For the first time since the awful moment when he had been told his wife was surely dead, he pulled himself, as the saying is, together.

"You know, I suppose, what the theory is?"

"I only know he's suspected—nothing else. Why, the police actually thought he'd disappeared this morning! On the way here they talked of getting a printed description of him in time for the afternoon papers."

"The theory," said the lawyer, in a low, tense tone, "is that not a spot of blood was found on Bosely's clothes because he committed that murder *naked*. It is believed that on coming in last night he went straight upstairs, stripped in the bathroom, put on his mackintosh, so as not to frighten the poor thing, and then, having beguiled her to go over to the door, seized the poker and—you know the rest."

"But they were a devoted couple, Sparks; you and I know that?"

"I'm not telling you what *I* think. I'm absolutely convinced that black as things look for him, Bosely is as innocent of this foul deed as I am. But as I came along here just now I said to myself, 'Thank God for the Court of Appeal!' Before we're through this business it's quite on the cards that it will be our last hope."

"D'you believe that an innocent man can be condemned to death in this country?"

"I do! And in old days he hung with no chance of escape."

John Bosely took a step nearer the door. If only for Jane's sake, he would fight to the death to clear himself of this at once awful, and ridiculous, charge.

"I've heard almost everything you've been saying," he began in a firm, collected voice.

But no one heard his words, for the narrow hall was filling up with policemen, and from the now open front door there advanced the inspector of police he had seen the night before, of whose questions, which had seemed so mysteriously useless then, he now knew the purport.

Putting his hand lightly on John Bosely's arm, the inspector exclaimed, in a low, clear voice, "I arrest you on the charge of having murdered your wife, Jane Bosely, yesterday evening, between the hours of six and eight o'clock."

There followed a pause, and John Bosely then said in an unemotional, quiet, tone, "I wish to say, before God, that I am absolutely innocent of this charge which has been brought against me."

The inspector scarce heard him in patience to the end. "I must warn you," he observed, in a cold and cutting tone, "that anything you say from now on may be used in evidence against you."

"Say when, Man!!"



Wood.

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IN THE DRESSING ROOM

By Fred W. Purvis.

A Meal with a Magician

(Continued from p. 14)

He took a small clay pipe out of his pocket and blew into it. A large brown bubble came out of the other end, shaped like a sausage. Oliver picked it off with the end of one of his tentacles and put it on a hot plate and it was a sausage, because I ate it. He made six sausages in this way, and while I was watching him Oliver handed down the vegetables. I don't know where he got them. The sauce and gravy came out of Mr. Leakey's hat, as usual.

Just after this the only accident of the evening happened. The beetle who carried the salt-cellar round tripped over a fold in the table-cloth and spilled the salt just in front of Mr. Leakey, who spoke to him very angrily.

"It's lucky for you, Leopold, that I'm a sensible man. If I were superstitious, which I'm not, I should think I was going to have bad luck. But it's you who are going to have bad luck, if anyone. I've a good mind to turn you back into a man and, if I do, I'll put you straight on to that carpet and send you to the nearest police station, and when the police ask you where you've been hiding, d'you think they'll believe you when you say you've been a beetle for the last year? Are you sorry?"

Leopold, with a great struggle, got out of his harness and rolled on his back, feebly waving his legs in the air as a dog does when he's ashamed of himself.

"When Leopold was a man," said Mr. Leakey, "he made money by swindling people. When the police found it out and were going to arrest him, he came to me for help, but I thought it served him right. So I said, 'If they catch you, you'll get sent to penal servitude for seven years. If you like I'll turn you into a beetle for five years, which isn't so long, and then, if you've been a good beetle, I'll make you into a man with a different sort of face, so the police won't know you.' So now Leopold is a beetle. Well, I see he's sorry for spilling the salt. Now Leopold, you must pick up all the salt you've spilt."

He turned Leopold over on his front, and I watched him begin to pick the salt up. It took him over an hour. First he picked it up a grain at a time in his mouth, lifted himself up on his front legs, and dropped it into the salt-cellar. Then he thought of a better plan. He was a beetle of the kind whose feelers are short and spread out into a fan. He started shovelling the salt with his feelers, and got on much quicker that way. But fairly soon he got uncomfortable. His feelers started to itch or something, and he had to wipe them with his legs. Finally, he got a bit of paper and used it for a shovel, holding it with his front feet.

"That's very clever for a beetle," said my host. "When I turn him back into a man he'll be quite good with his hands, and I expect he'll be able to earn his living at an honest job."

As we were finishing the turkey, Mr. Leakey looked up anxiously from time to time.

"I hope Abdu'l Makkar won't be late with his strawberries," he said.

"Strawberries?" I asked in amazement, for it was the middle of January.

"Oh yes, I've sent Abdu'l Makkar, who is a jinn, to New Zealand for some. Of course, it's summer there. He oughtn't to be long now, if he has been good, but you know what jinns are; they have their faults like the rest of us. Curiosity, especially. When one sends them on long errands they will fly too high. They like to get up quite close to heaven to overhear what the angels are saying, and then the angels throw shooting stars at them. Then they drop their parcels, or come home half-scorched. He ought to be back soon, he's been away over an hour. Meanwhile we'll have some other fruit in case he's late."

He got up and tapped the four corners of the table with his wand. At each corner the wood swelled, then it cracked, and a little green shoot came out and started growing. In a minute they were already about a foot high, with several leaves at the top, and the bottom already woody. I could see from the leaves that one was a cherry, another a pear, and the third a peach, but I did not know the fourth.

As Oliver was clearing away the remains of the turkey with four of his arms and helping himself to a sausage with a

fifth, Abdu'l Makkar came in. He came feet first through the ceiling, which seemed to close behind him like water in the tank of the diving birds' house in the Zoo, when you look at it from underneath while a penguin dives in. It shook a little for a moment afterwards. He narrowly missed one of Oliver's arms, but alighted safely on the floor, bending his knees to break his fall, and bowing deeply to Mr. Leakey. He had a brown face with rather a long nose, and looked quite like a man, except that he had a pair of leathery wings folded on his back, and his nails were of gold. He wore a turban and clothes of green silk.

"Oh peacock of the world and redresser of injustices," he said, "thy unworthy servant comes into the presence with rare and refreshing fruit."

"The presence deigns to express gratification at the result of thy labours."

"The joy of thy negligible slave is as the joy of King Solomon, son of David (on whom be peace, if he has not already obtained peace), when he first beheld Balkis, the Queen of Sheba. May the Terminator of Delights and Separator of Companions be far from this dwelling."

(Continued overleaf)



Owner of jerry-built bungalow (tersely to seething postman): "Look here, hang it all, do you mind ringing the bell next time, instead of banging the knocker like that? It shakes the house and disturbs the baby."

"May the Deluder of Intelligences never trouble the profundity of thine apprehension."

"Oh, Dominator of Demons and Governor of Goblins, what egregious enchanter or noble necromancer graces thy board?"

"It is written, oh Abdu'l Makkar, in the book of the sayings of the prophet Shoaib, the apostle of the Midianites, that curiosity slew the cat of Pharaoh, King of Egypt."

"That is a true word."

"Thy departure is permitted. Awaken me at the accustomed hour. But stay! My safety razor hath no more blades and the shops of London are closed. Fly therefore to Montreal, where it is even now high noon, and purchase me a packet thereof."

"I tremble and obey."

"Why dost thou tremble, oh audacious among the Ifreets?"

"Oh, Emperor of Enchantment, the lower air is full of aeroplanes, flying swifter than a magic carpet, and each making a din like unto the bursting of the great dam of Sheba, and the upper air is infested with meteorites."

"Fly therefore at a height of five miles and thou shalt avoid both the one peril and the other. And now, oh Performer of Commands and Executor of Behests, thou hast my leave to depart."

"May the wisdom of Plato, the longevity of Shiqq, the wealth of Solomon, and the success of Alexander be thine."

"The like unto thee, with brass knobs thereon."

The jinn now vanished, this time through the floor. While he and Mr. Leakey had been talking the trees had grown up to about four feet high and flowered. The flowers were now falling off; the little green fruits were swelling.

"You have to talk like that to a jinn or you lose his respect. I hope you don't mind my not introducing you, but really jinns may be quite awkward at times," said my host. "Of course, Abdu'l Makkar is a nice chap and means well, but he might be very embarrassing to you, as you don't know the Word of Power to send him away. For instance, if you were playing cricket and went in against a fast bowler, he'd probably turn up and ask you, 'Shall I slay thine enemy, oh Defender of the Stumps, or merely turn him into a he-goat of loathsome appearance and afflicted with the mange?' You know, I used to be very fond of watching cricket, but I can't do it now. Quite a little magic will upset a match. Last year I went to see the Australians playing against Gloucester, and just because I felt a little sympathetic with Gloucestershire the Australian wickets went down like ninepins. If I hadn't left before the end they'd have been beaten. And after that I couldn't go to any of the Test matches. After all, one wants the best side to win."

We next ate the New Zealand strawberries which were very good, with Phyllis's cream. While we did so, Pompey, who acted as a sort of walking stove, came out again and melted some cheese to make a Welsh rarebit. After this we went on to dessert. The fruit was now quite ripe. The fourth tree bore half-a-dozen beautiful golden fruits, shaped rather like apricots, but much bigger, and my host told me they were mangoes, which of course usually grow in India. In fact you can't make them grow in England, except by magic. So I said I would try a mango.

"Aha," said Mr. Leakey, "this is where I have a pull over Lord Melchett or the Duke of Westminster, or any other rich man. They might be able to get mangoes here by aeroplane, but they couldn't give them as dessert at a smart dinner-party."

"Why not?"

"That shows you've never eaten one. The only proper place to eat a mango is in your bath. You see it has a tough skin and a squashy inside, so when once you get through the skin all the juice squirts out. And that would make a nasty mess of people's white shirts. D'you ever wear a stiff-fronted shirt?"

"Not often."

"A good thing too. You probably don't know why people wear them. It's a curious story. About a hundred

years ago a great Mexican enchanter, called Whiztopocoatl, came over to Europe. And he got very annoyed with the rich men. He didn't so much mind their being rich, but he thought they spent their money on such ugly things, and were dreadfully stodgy and smug. So he decided to turn them all into turtles. Now to do that somebody has to say two different spells at the same time, which is pretty difficult, I can tell you. So Whiztopocoatl went round to an English sorcerer called Mr. Benedict Barnacle to borrow a two-headed parrot that belonged to him. It was rather like one of those two-headed eagles they used to have on the Russian and Austrian flags. Then he was going to teach one of the heads one spell, and the other head the second spell, and when the parrot said both at once all the rich men would have turned into turtles. But Mr. Barnacle persuaded him to be less fierce, so finally they agreed that for a hundred years the rich men in Europe should be made to wear clothes only fit for turtles. Because, of course, the front of a turtle is stiff and flat, and it is the only sort of animal that would be quite comfortable in a shirt with a stiff flat front. They made a spell to stiffen all the shirts, and of course it worked very well, but it's working off now, and soon nobody will wear such silly clothes any more.

"About your mango; you can eat it quite safely, if you just wait a moment while I enchant it so that it won't splash over you."

Quite a short spell and a little wiggling of his wand were enough, and then I ate the mango. It was wonderful. It was the only fruit I have ever eaten that was better than the best strawberries. I can't describe the flavour, which is a mixture of all sorts of things including a little resin, like the smell of a pine forest in summer. There is a huge flattish stone in the middle, too big to get into your mouth, and all round it is a squashy yellow pulp. To test the spell I tried to spill some down my waistcoat, but it merely jumped up into my mouth. Mr. Leakey ate a pear and gave me the other five mangoes to take home. But I had to eat them in my bath because they weren't enchanted.

While we were having coffee (out of the hat, of course) Mr. Leakey rubbed one corner of the table with his wand and it began to sprout with very fine green grass. When it was about as high as the grass on a lawn he called Phyllis out of her hutch and she ate some of it for her dinner. We talked for a while about magic, football, and the odder sorts of dog such as Bedlington terriers and rough-haired dachshunds, and then I said I must be getting home.

"I'll take you home," said Mr. Leakey, "but when you have a day to spare you must come round and spend it with me, if you'd care to see the sort of things I generally do, and we might go over to India or Java or somewhere for the afternoon. Let me know when you're free. But now just stand on this carpet and shut your eyes, because people often get giddy the first two or three times they travel by magic carpet."

We got on to the carpet. I took a last look at the table, where Leopold had just finished picking up the salt and was resting while Phyllis was chewing the cud. Then I shut my eyes, my host told the carpet my address, flapped his ears, and I felt a rush of cold air on my cheeks and a slight giddiness. Then the air was warm again. Mr. Leakey told me to open my eyes, and I was in my sitting-room at home five miles away. As the room is small and there were a number of books and things on the floor, the carpet could not settle down properly and stayed about a foot up in the air. Luckily it was quite stiff, so I stepped down off it and turned the light on.

"Good-night," said Mr. Leakey, bending down to shake my hand, and then he flapped his ears, and he and the carpet vanished. I was left in my room with nothing but a nice full feeling and a parcel of mangoes to persuade me that I had not been dreaming.

If you like this story I will tell you later on about a day I spent with Mr. Leakey helping him with his work and how Pompey was naughty and ran away down a volcano. But that is quite a different story. Still, I hope you think my friend Mr. Leakey is a nice man. Because I do.



Ruth Harriet Louise

" . . . AND FAIR COLUMBINE WAS SHE! "

The Sisters of Changton

Margery—*cont. from p. 19*

back here and throw ourselves on the tender mercies of the proprietor of this palatial establishment. That means bread and cheese and no pickles all to-morrow. But I've a theory that there may be humble citizens who would be glad to cater for our small needs at six bob a head."

"I'm game," I agreed. "I can hobble round the village all right—what there is of it. And at the worst we can always come back here and be stung."

"Then finish off your swipes and follow me," sang Bernard; so presently we nodded to the landlord and out we went.

It was pitch dark, and hardly a light showing in any window. Changton Margery was evidently one of those villages where the inhabitants either go to bed or to the local hostelry at sundown—according to funds—to avoid wasting candles. The moon had either gone to bed or had not yet risen. Still, there were stars above and most of the cottage fronts and garden walls were lime-washed, so we could see our way about.

Still we could not see a likely place where we could stay the night. The small cottages all had that air of containing an agricultural labourer and his wife, two bed-ridden mothers, and a dozen children all crowded into four rooms. The larger cottages—you can always tell by the window curtains and the way the gardens are laid out—looked as if they were occupied by archdeacons' widows who would not only feel insulted but tell the Alsatian about it. It looked to me to be a perfectly hopeless village. There was only the pub.

And then we reached the brow of the hill which marked the boundary of the village street, and on our right was a largish old-fashioned house standing flush with the roadside. A funny, tumbledown old place it seemed, with a high, solid, wooden double gate beside it, arched at the top and spiked, which evidently gave access to a stable yard.

There was a light shining in one of the ground-floor windows, a faint bluish light, which at ordinary times might have given us to wonder what kind of illumination was being used within. But just then we were both thinking of supper and bed, and I was also thinking about my blisters. One cannot be thinking of everything at once.

Bernard went up to the window through which the bluish light filtered wanly on to the road. Then he uttered a view-hallo. Leaning against the top of the lower sill was a card inscribed "APARTMENTS." The letters had been cut out of the card so that the light gleamed through.

"Here's what we want," he said, and strode to the door. He pulled an old-fashioned bell-pull. "Damn! The thing doesn't work."

feel like wandering around and having a look—see? If there isn't we can come

But although he heard no jangle of any bell the summons was answered. The door was opened slowly, and a woman's voice said "Yes?"

I came up and stood beside Bernard and saw that two women filled the space between the door-posts. One was tall and thin and the other was short and stout. They looked to me to be between thirty and forty. Obviously they were sisters. They had the same faces. Had their bodily construction been on the same lines one would not have been able to say which was which. They both had the same squint. And they were dreadful women.

I don't say that because of the squint. The most fascinating girl I ever knew used to squint, and no human infirmity ever made me shrink from a fellow creature. But I did shrink back from these. I felt just as if I had found myself in the act of stepping on a snake. Bernard told me afterwards that he felt very much the same about them.

Well, but we were there. We had to make some excuse for calling. Something had to be said, and Bernard said it. He told me afterwards that nothing would have induced him to stay there the night. He intended quarrelling about the price of the rooms, however cheap they might be, or finding some fault which would allow us to depart

with reasonable dignity. But finding ourselves on the doorstep facing these dreadful sisters we had to pretend to consider the question of taking their rooms.

"Could you put us up for the night?" Bernard asked in a rather queer voice. "I see you have rooms to let."

"Yes, we've plenty of rooms, haven't we, Amelia?" said the tall one. "Come in."

The short one had burst out laughing, and it wasn't pleasant laughter.

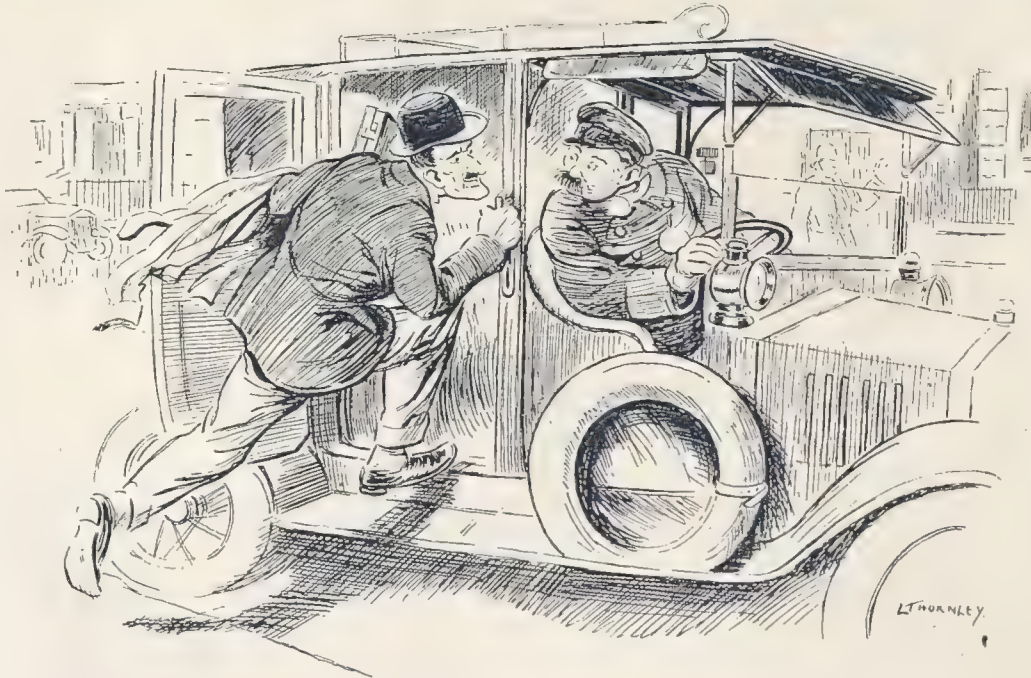
"Plenty of rooms, Lavinia," agreed the short one, while the tall one laughed just as unpleasantly. We noticed then and afterwards that one sister always laughed while the other spoke, as if at some private joke that we were supposed not to understand.

We entered diffidently. Bernard and I both forget, even if we noticed at the time, how the hall and the rooms were illuminated. We don't remember any lights, but we could see quite well—almost too well, it seems to us now.

As we entered and the door closed behind us we were sensible of the atmosphere of the house. It reeked of dust and decay, and of something worse. That dank, earthy smell which one associates with vaults and charnel houses smote the nostrils of us both. There was no vestige of furniture in the hall, which was festooned with cobwebs—not so much as a peg on which one could hang his hat, or an umbrella stand. The taller sister threw open a door.

"This is the big sitting-room," she said, while the shorter one uttered a squeal of laughter.

"Yes," she echoed, "this is the big sitting-room," and the other one echoed her mirthless squeal.



Absconding Cashier (selecting destination at random): Victoria! Drive like blazes!

Taxi-driver: Which station, guv'nor?

Absconding Cashier: Don't care—whichever has the most trains!



A STUDY OF CHILD'S HEAD

Lord Burghersh—from the picture by A. K. Lawrence, A.R.A.



THE LANDLORD OF "THE CHEQUERS"

A first reproduction in colour of Mr. J. Kinnersley Kirby's amusing picture

"Who'er has travelled life's dull round,
Where'er his stages may have been,
May sigh to think he still have found
His warmest welcome at an inn."

—SHENSTON 2.

Leander Swam the Hellespont

(Continued from p. 34)

"So many men have tried to make love to me like you did."

This anyway was straight from the shoulder and Bassett began to see where he stood. A pretty woman like Louise must have grown very tired of the crudity of men. Just a bit ashamed, he tried to defend himself.

"I thought last night that—that you liked me. I was wrong?"

She made no answer and there came to his mind her words about wanting to give a man a child if she ever had another love affair. He began to understand her point of view still more. She would want to be very sure she loved a man first.

"I am sorry; last night you made me think you loved me. You don't?"

Again no answer.

"Why did you let me kiss you?"

She looked up, meeting his eyes. "Do you think kissing me would be enough to make me love you? Before I could love a man he would have to do more than that; he would have to do something fine."

"I see Captain Harper is waiting for me. I must go; we shall be there watching you. Good luck."

They gripped hands in sign that if they were parting they

at least stayed friends. That hand-shake was an effort for Bassett; he wanted Louise quite desperately now.

"Something fine," she had said.

If he broke the record at the Grand Tremplin that day? No, in his heart he knew that would not be enough, and in the meanwhile Dick Harper had arrived as a competitor to complicate the game. Supposing she chose Harper? Bassett got into the sleigh to go down to the Grand Tremplin distracted with misgivings.

II

Poised at the top of the run-way leading down to the point from which he was to make his mighty leap into the air, Bassett watched the hundreds of upturned faces. Louise was there somewhere and Dick Harper, cameramen, newspaper reporters, winter-sports enthusiasts from every corner of the world. The starter's flag was still raised against him. He had already tested the snow and knew it was too soft for any record breaking, but still, conditions were good enough to make a reasonable leap.

The flag dropped, Bassett jumped round on his skis, and headed at full speed for the platform from which he must take off. Next moment, arms outspread like the

"I can't."
"Are you angry with me?"
"No . . . a . . . a little disappointed."
"By me! Why?"

wings of a bird, he was hurtling through the air, all eyes turned on him. He landed, staggered for the perilous instant that all ski jumpers know, righted himself by skill and sheer will power, and sped on downwards erect upon his feet.

"Forty-five metres," the judge announced through the megaphone.

There was a murmur. Forty-five metres was nothing wonderful; still, it was not a bad distance, 135 ft.

Other jumpers took their turn; a Norwegian eventually cleared the fifty metre mark. Victor Bassett could not improve on his first jump; the judge announced the competition over and the Norwegian the winner; the crowd trickled back to their hotels and hearty lunches.

That evening after dinner Louise sat with Dick Harper and danced with him. Bassett, outwardly placid, inwardly gnawed by jealousy, watched the pair. They seemed to be getting along together well enough. Over and over again he tried to weigh up Dick Harper's attractions; he was a good-looking young fellow, witty and gay, a capital sportsman in his own line of country which had more to do with horses than with mountains. There was no reason why Louise should not find him pleasing. Once, as Bassett saw Louise's hair very near to Dick Harper's cheek, just as it had been near to his when they had danced together the night before, his teeth clenched on the stem of his pipe; he felt he could not bear it if he had been cut out.

He went to the bar and drank a whisky and soda; then, making a detour to avoid the ballroom, got into the lift. Arrived in his room, he undressed, opened the window wide, and got into bed. Sleep eluded him again; try as he would he could not get the girl out of his mind; her perfumed hair, lovely eyes, and the

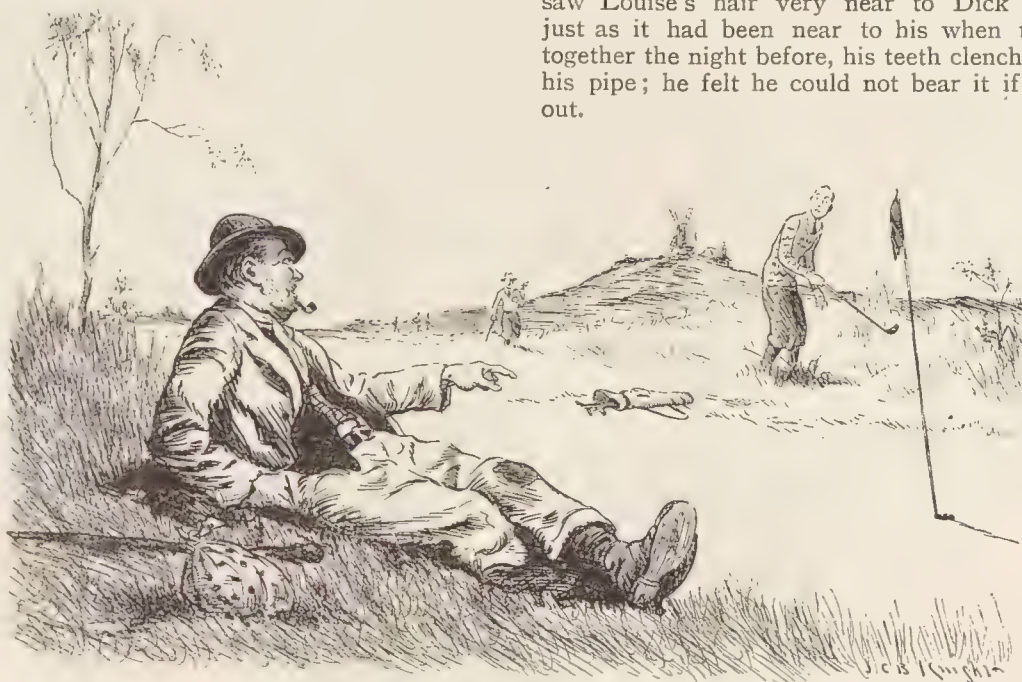
clinging softness of her arms around him became incarnate in the darkness.

That she was ripe for mischief, if not with him then with another, was the torturing thought. And that other was with her now, perhaps at that very moment cutting the ground from under his feet.

Through the open windows he could see the stars shining very brightly in the dark clear sky; on his cheek he could feel the chill of the night air and knew it must be freezing hard. That would make conditions good for skiing to-morrow. In the morning at the Grand Tremplin there had been too much dampness in the snow for real pace, but now that it was freezing hard the surface would become powdery and fast as ice.

Thinking of the thrill of a fast descent, Bassett flung an arm outside the bedclothes. By Pete! Next day he would go up to the top of the Brébant; he could see the jagged outline of the peak from where he lay. Right at the summit he would eat his sandwich lunch in glorious solitude and then ski down into the valley. It would be a man's job, that, which any but a first-class skier would be mad to try. Even first-class skiers invariably took guides, since a fall and a broken leg in the mountains, with no one

(Continued overleaf)



"You looking for a golf-ball, guv'ner?"
"Yes."
"It went in that little 'ole there!"

to help, meant certain death from cold. He would take no guide; he would come down from the Brébant alone; a thing no other man had ever done before. Not with any idea of winning Louise; he did not fancy a feat like that would carry weight with her, but for his own sake, to make himself feel a man again; no longer a woman's besotted slave.

Having taken his resolution to do the Brébant alone next day Bassett felt at peace. The church clock chimed—one—two—three—twelve strokes in all, silvery clear. He heard the last chime strike, realized vaguely that downstairs the orchestra had stopped, then fell asleep.

III

Downstairs Dick Harper was "taking a dekko at it," as he would himself have put it. In other words he was using all the aids he knew to win the favours of Louise. When the dancing stopped he manoeuvred her into a corner of the lounge and ordered drinks. These came, and having fortified himself with a good gulp of whisky and allowed a brief profound silence to elapse, he looked at her and said:

"I think you are the most beautiful woman I have ever seen in my life."

"Thank you," said Louise, looking at the young soldier and smiling kindly. He was not a bad boy; she liked his curly brown hair and mischievous kitten's eyes. A year ago, perhaps? Oh, well, what was the use of thinking of a year ago? Anything might have happened then. Not now, though.

Encouraged by the smile he took her hand, which she allowed him to hold for an instant and then withdrew.

"I did enjoy dancing with you," he said.

"Same to you."

She knew she ought to get up and go instead of sitting there exchanging badinage; but she was tired and wanted to finish her drink quietly. She ought to be able to keep this young man in his place with a little tact; besides he had been very pleasant and obliging all day, and she hoped he would prove a useful companion in the future. A girl needed a boy friend in a place like that. It was a pity about Victor Bassett. She had thought better of him. Were all men just alike? In her heart she knew they were; had it not been proved to her many times!

Dick Harper, steeplechase rider, believed in the same method with women that he employed for winning races. As soon as the flag fell he galloped at the first fence as hard as he could go. Either a chap got over or he got down.

They were in the far corner of the lounge, screened by a palm from everybody's sight. He edged nearer to Louise and put his arm along the back of her chair. The manoeuvre made her a little uneasy, but she sat tight; he would surely not become obstreperous; she had scarcely spoken to him until that morning.

Dick had kissed women on shorter acquaintance than that; his record was an infantry officer's wife in Simla, whom he had found walking alone in the gardens of Vice-Regal Lodge and embraced heartily to her great delight, though he had never set eyes on the woman, much less spoken to her, before.



Boy (on first introduction to infant sister): H'm—is it British?

Taking a quick look to make sure they were unobserved, Dick dropped his hand on Louise's shoulder, bent forward and made a dive for her. All he got was the back of her neck. Louise got to her feet as quick as he had ever seen a woman get to them before; also he had never seen one look more angry.

He waited for what he knew was coming to him, but she made none of the remarks traditionally supposed to be suitable on such occasions, such as "You beast!"

She surveyed Captain Harper, her eyes angrily alight, and said: "You poodle-faking little puppy!"

And Captain Harper, who had ridden in the Grand Military Gold Cup at Sandown ten months before, looked and felt like a puppy that had been soundly whipped.

"I came out here to do some winter sports, not mess about in hotel lounges," said Louise.

"Let's do some," said Captain Harper, brilliantly inspired.

"De l'audace! Encore de l'audace. Toujours de l'audace!" as Danton said. Audacity saved Dick Harper's skin that night. As he looked at her, his kitten's eyes twinkling, Louise longed to burst out laughing; but he must be chastened further first. Such cheek!

"You can't ski—can you?"

"Not a lot. I'll try and make any place you want, though."

"I am going to do the Col de Praz to-morrow. You'll never get down; it is frightfully steep in parts."

"I'll take my skis off and slide down then; in fact I'll fall down the whole way if you will forgive me and take me with you."

He was so like a puppy wagging its tail; she had not the heart to be angry with him any more.

"All right; we'll start at ten." She held out her hand. "Promise to be a good boy to-morrow."

"Well, I shan't try to kiss you with my skis on. I can hardly stand up in the blinking things as it is."

IV

Next morning Bassett left early. It would take him four or five hours to climb the Brébant, and the one thing he must on no account risk was being caught by darkness coming down; that would simply be suicide.

Hide strips, to fasten on his skis when climbing, tied round his waist; haversack on back containing a packet of sandwiches and those two valuable items in the equipment of a mountaineer—a stout cork and flask of brandy, he crunched across the crisp snow in front of the hotel heading for the Brébant.

Louise, dressing early in preparation for her expedition with Dick Harper, happened to be at the window. She recognized Bassett's tall, broad-shouldered figure striding off alone.

"Sulking!" she said to herself, "wonder how long he'll keep it up."

In her heart she had already forgiven, knowing well that she had been quite as much to blame; all the same she still was not certain in her own mind if Victor Bassett was a rotter. Was he of the love 'em and leave 'em kind, or was he the sort that would stand over you if you fell

(Continued on p. vi)

LES SÉLECTIONS NOUVELLES D'HOUBIGANT



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ESSENCES THIS TENACIOUS PERFUME
EXHALES ITS PERFECTION AFTER
A PERIOD OF EVAPORATION

HOUBIGANT
PARIS

The Sisters of Changton

Margery—*cont. from p. 62*

on the sense of humour. The room was quite bare of furniture or any kind of decorations, and the paper was peeling off walls which were rotten with damp. Neither of us said a word. There seemed nothing to be said.

We were shown the smaller sitting-room, which was similar but rather worse. The largest spider I have ever seen ran up the wall like a trapeze artist about to do his turn, as if it wanted to get away from these abominable women. We envied the spider its agility.

They took us upstairs, each taking it in turn to talk to us while the other laughed. The stairs creaked like cheap new boots, and afterwards I found my hand black with the dust off the banisters. The short one threw open the door of another empty room and disturbed a rat which scuttled over to the fireplace and vanished.

"This is a nice room. It would do very well for one of you," said the tall sister while the shorter one cackled.

"But there's no bed in it," I protested, "and no furniture of any kind."

"I thought young men didn't mind roughing it," said the short one, while the other laughed.

"Yes, we thought young men liked roughing it," agreed the other. "They used to in our day. Many a young man has slept soundly in this room."

"Yes, and gone on sleeping soundly afterwards," chuckled the short one.

At which exquisite joke they both exploded in unseemly and mirthless laughter.

"I'm afraid it won't quite do for us," Bernard said slowly, not knowing what else was possible for him to say.

"There are worse places," said the tall sister gravely—and this time there was no laughter.

"Yes," agreed the other in the same sinister tone. "There is hell, you know."

I don't know about Bernard, but I suddenly felt extremely sick. In a vague sort of way I wondered how these two creatures lived. The house seemed to be empty of everything except dust and dirt damp.

"We'd better go," I said to Bernard.

"Yes, we'd better go," he answered dully.

"Yes, you'd better go," agreed the sisters, making the whole thing sound like an incident in one of Maeterlinck's plays, and their abominable laughter broke out in unison.

Downstairs they shepherded us to a side door.

"Do you mind going out this way?" said the taller one, quite quietly and courteously. "Straight across the yard and out through the big gates."

I don't remember that it seemed particularly strange to me that they shouldn't be letting us out by the front door. I wanted to go, and I didn't mind how I went. They let us out into the cobbled yard, and fronting us were the high wooden gates which we had seen from the road.

"Good night," we said shortly and briefly.

"But not good-bye," squawked the shorter sister.

"No," squawked the other in the same voice, "we shall meet again sooner than you think."

And they both went into paroxysms of sinister laughter, and stood together, watching us go.

Mercifully I happened to be looking downwards, and at about the fourth step I sprang backwards and caught Bernard by the arm.

I suppose, really, there was something to laugh about. It depends

"Hell!" I exclaimed.

Certainly it might have been the entrance to hell if our forefathers' belief in its geographical situation is correct. At our feet, and on our direct line to the gate, yawned an open well. We had been sent to walk straight into it.

We walked round it instead and then turned.

My nerves were shaken up. It was the only time in my life that I have ever sworn at women. I am sure Bernard could say the same for himself. We faced each other—our two selves and the two sisters, they on one side of the well and we on the other—and we called them all the lady-dogs we could lay our tongues to. And the more we cursed them the more they laughed.

Then Bernard said something about calling in the police, and at that word they positively screamed with laughter, as if it were the best joke they had ever heard. And suddenly the strangest possible thing happened.

You have been suddenly cut off on the telephone? Well, the laughter of those two dreadful sisters was cut off in the same way, and the two dreadful sisters weren't there. Where they went we don't know—but we can guess. We found ourselves suddenly and terribly alone in the yard of an empty house. We said nothing—I for one was sweating with terror—and picked our way carefully to the high, double gate.

Out in the road our courage returned. We had some vague idea of knocking up these unpleasant ladies and continuing our remonstrations. But now there was no light in the ground-floor window nor any "Apartments" card. We tugged at the bell and hammered on the door, but nothing happened. I knew in my bones that the house was empty.

After a little while we found ourselves back at the inn. I don't remember walking there, and I am sure we did not speak on the way. Inside the same crowd was still playing darts and shove-ha'penny.

"Brandy, I think," said Bernard.

"Yes, brandy," I agreed.

An ancient labourer was sitting on a chair at the corner of the counter.

"Who lives in that large house up at the top of the village?" I asked him. "It's an old place with very high stable gates. About two hundred yards from here and on your right."

"Nobody don't live there," he replied. "It's a funny house, that is."

Privately I couldn't agree with him. I had found nothing funny in it.

"Nobody won't live there neither. They can't let or sell it. Years ago there was two sisters had it, and they used to let apartments to summer visitors. Well, they murdered one poor bloke for his money—smothered him while he was asleep, they did—and then chucked his body down a well. They didn't 'ang for it, as they ought to have done. They was called insane and they died in the asylum."

"I think another brandy," I said to Bernard.

"I think so too," said Bernard.

"And," resumed the ancient rustic, "there's a very funny thing about that well. Strangers on 'oliday, just like you might be, are always falling down that well. They've boarded it up and bricked it up, but somebody always comes and takes the boards or the bricks away. Who does it they can't find out. And nobody doesn't seem to know how visitors seem to get into that yard at night."

"Have a pint," said Bernard, and added sarcastically: "Do you know any more funny stories?"

To me he said shortly: "Brandy again?"

"Yes, thanks," I said, putting my glass on the counter with a shaking hand. "Brandy again."



Burglar: Oh lor' may as well toddle 'orf 'ome
—I've never yet struck lucky in a 'aspidistra
'ousehold



WHERE THE PIXIES PASSED



WHERE THE PIC-NIC PASSED

By L. R. Brightwell



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"THE MAN WHO BID HALF-A-GUINEA AT TATTERSALL'S"

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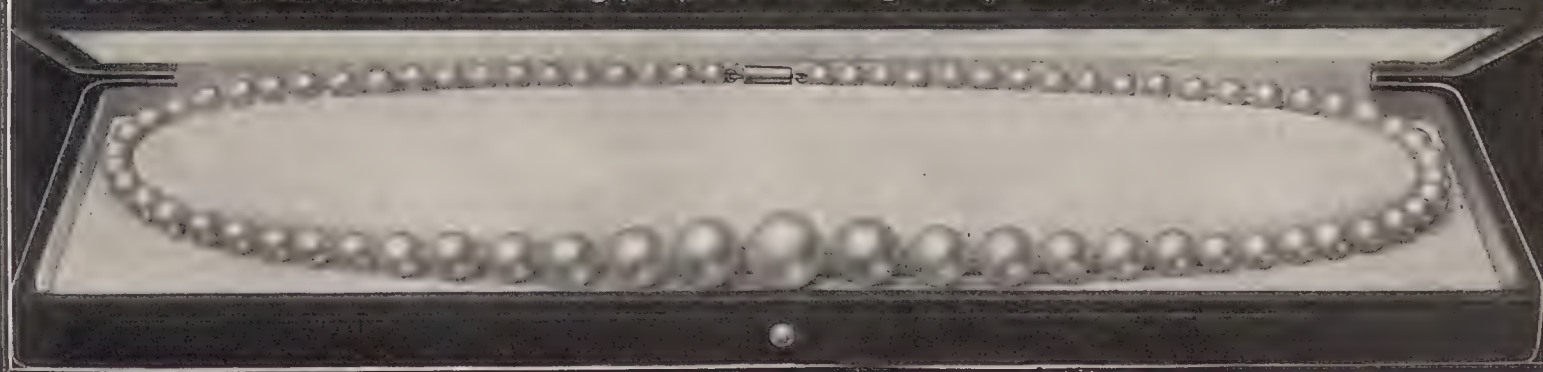


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Game and Rubber

(Continued from p. 6)

He turned rather reluctantly from the pig, but again allowed his attention to become riveted on a further collection of objects of interest in Jones's bungalow.

"Seems to keep a good many bottles of whisky about here," he remarked.

"Ah yes, sir," said Willoughby sadly. "Poor Jones, whew—rather—I'm afraid—yes, a bit given that way, sir. That's in confidence."

"Well, a pwetty good job, too," said Digby Pound firmly. "Because I don't mind telling you, between you and me and the gate-post, I'm going to have one."

Ten minutes later they were on the road again. Bacchus aroused and fostered in Mr. Pound that welcome self-assertion which he had found to be essential in dealing with this vainglorious Pink. The latter became subdued almost to silence. But even then he attributed the sudden show of ill-temper in Mr. Pound to the annoyance of having to postpone the unpleasant task of firing Jones until next day.

Gradually, as they went, the storm flickered and rumbled towards them. Then, of a sudden, the darkness was torn asunder by wicked, blinding swords of flame. The clouds seemed heavy to bursting point, but as yet the rain held off. Again and again flashed the lightning, as though all the pent-up malice of a thousand devils were loosed to shrivel the world.

"By Jove," said Willoughby, "we're used to pretty tidy storms out here, but this is a corker."

"Well, don't chat about it; dwive, dwive," exhorted Mr. Pound between the convulsive crashes of heaven.

Then, ahead of them, far down the road, shot up a pulsating beam, dimmed now and again by the piercing glare of the lightning, but shimmering to the sky in the black intervals between.

"Good heavens!" cried Willoughby. "The bungalow! It's been struck. It's on fire. Look!"

All the demons and Mr. Pound replied simultaneously; the former in a triumphant, deafening, crowning explosion, the latter in

"Oh, vewwy well," said Mr. Pound. "You can send over for this blighter in the morning. I'll see him then."

a hortative tenor rising almost to soprano in its fervour: "Gweat Cæsar! Dwive; dwive like old Hawvy."

Niagara burst upon them in their final lap, churning the road into a broth of red hissing mud; but not even the downpour could dim the furnace of the blazing bungalow. Poor Jean, like some ocean wraith in her streaming affright, rushed towards them as they sprang from the car.

"Oh, Willoughby, Willoughby—"

"What happened? Quick!"

"The very first flash struck the bungalow. It all flared up in a minute."

"But my wife?" cried Digby Pound.

Jean breathlessly explained that Mrs. Pound was all right, having gone off with Mr. Jones.

"Oh, thank goodness for that," said Mr. Pound. "Now I don't care a hoot. That is, of course, I'm vewwy sowwy for you; but thank goodness for Jones."

They stood in the compound, saturated almost to the point of being knocked about by the violence of the tropical cascade, and surveyed the gruesome spectacle of the roaring and flaming bungalow. The Chinese boys had bolted far into the rain, but a chorus of wailing coolies from the estate performed elaborate but singularly effete demonstrations of dismay at a safe distance.

"I'm well insured, that's one thing," sighed Willoughby, and as an almost imperative after-thought, "that's more than Jones is."

"But look here," he turned quite petulantly to Jean. "What about that fire-extinguishing gadget I invented? You could have got at that if you hadn't lost your head."

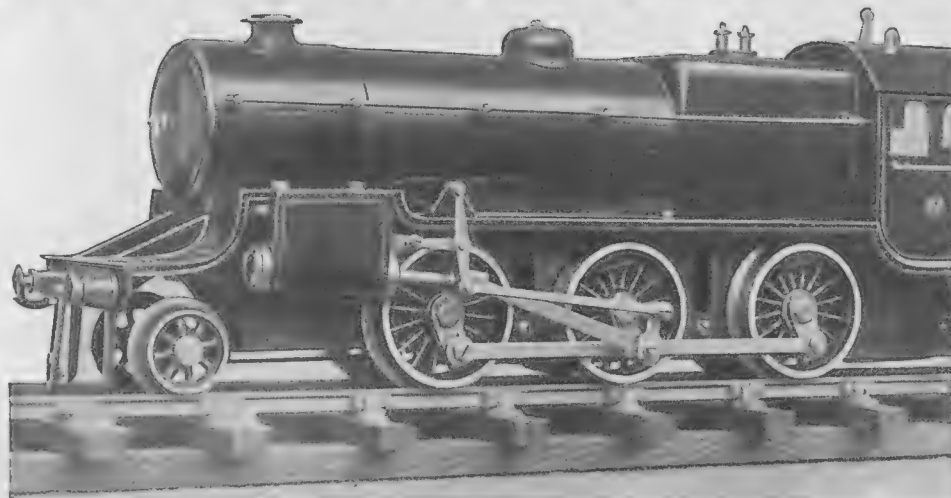
"It was that patent fire-extinguisher that got struck by lightning," replied Jean patiently.

Illuminated by the fires of the fiends and encouraged by the rousing chorus of a thousand demons, Jones and his Evie pursued their way down the bad road and reached Kulu Glap exactly ten seconds before the rain. Thus does Satan take care of his own.

But hunger, combined with the punctuality of the untidy head-boy in serving dinner, robbed Satan of anything like a real break for the next half hour; and Jones had only got as far as spilling Evie's liqueur off the edge of her long chair in the veranda after the meal, when the Bukit Nanas car arrived and deposited its three

(Continued on p. iv)

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clammy refugees with their unhappy tidings. Jones pulled his lean nose self-consciously at the sight of Mr. Pound. "I'm sorry about all this, sir—I tried to 'phone"—and so on; but Mr. Pound put him at his ease immediately.

"Gwand work, Jones," he said. "I was tickled to death to hear you'd got my wife. All I want now are some dwy clothes and a gweat deal to dwink."

Jones and the dirty boy really put up a noble show. Within an hour the entire party was dry, warmed, fed, and clothed in a variety of spare sarongs and singlets. The modesty of Jean Pink was further preserved by the loan of an ancient dressing-gown. Indeed, the inefficient Jones organized the arrangements for the night with remarkable ease. He parked the Pinks in his own bedroom and Evie in his single spare bed. "I'm afraid you and I will have to do what we can with a couple of mosquito nets on the veranda," he informed Mr. Pound.

"Wight," said that gentleman. "That'll suit me fine. And I'll have another spot of that whisky as a pwe-caution against fever."

Jean, a pathetic figure, retired almost at once to her sorry sanctuary in Jones's bed. Willoughby lingered for some time with his host and Pound on the veranda. The terrific events of the last few hours might complicate the delicate mission of the director, and it seemed unlikely that Pound could have the heart to fire Jones until the morning. Still, it might be instructive to glean some idea of Pound's attitude towards Jones. Unfortunately, however, Mrs. Pound rather tactlessly butted in from the spare room in her borrowed night attire—a curiously indelicate proceeding in front of a man like Jones—while Pound, who seemed to be taking very thorough precautions against the fever, appeared incapable of any discussion more serious than a lot of ignorant drivel about pig.

So Willoughby concluded that, whatever happened, there would be no question

of Jones receiving his impending sentence that night, and joined his Jean in the odium of Jones's bedroom, a somewhat wistful and shattered study in efficiency. But it only showed how truly deep and sphinx-like a man Pound was—for the very first tidings that Willoughby heard in the morning were that Jones had duly been relieved of his duties.

When, after an hour or two on the veranda, Evie went to bed, Jones, with all due courtesy, accompanied her for a moment, just to see she had all she wanted. On returning to the veranda he discovered Mr. Pound, now insured beyond all possible hazard against fever, vainly attempting to disentangle himself from the folds of his mosquito net in order to give effective delivery to a sudden inspired and needle-witted arbitration.

"I got it, Jones," he cried, struggling the while with the meshes of mosquito net, as Grecian heroes struggle with serpents in statues in the Crystal Palace. "I got it, Jones; now I know whatta dedo—I know now, Jones, doan tell me. I like you, Jones, by gad I do, I like you, I do, Jones. An' I tell you what, Jones, I tell you these two wotten estates only want one man'ger between them, I tell you that. Wighty-ho, then. This poor, niggling, insuffewable, gimcwack nuisance of a Pink—he's burnt his bally bungalow, so let him have this one; go on, let him have it, Jones, let him. And wun the two bally estates together, go on, Jones, let him wun them. And bung up this blinkin' bungalow bung full of his pifflin' patent pwops, go on, Jones, let him, and you come with me and find pig. And I'll take you home with me, Jones; and find you goo' job at home after the pig. Because I like you, Jones, and so does my wife, and I'm not 's'pwise because I like you too. And together we'll all thwee go away after the pig, and after the pig we'll all thwee go home together. And if that isn't a judgment that makes ole Solomon turn in his blinkin' sarcophagus, may I never get my head out of this b——y mosquito net."



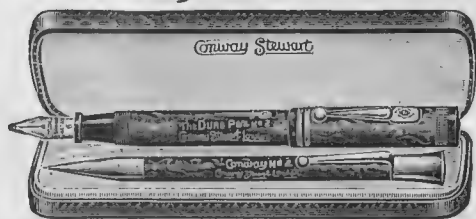
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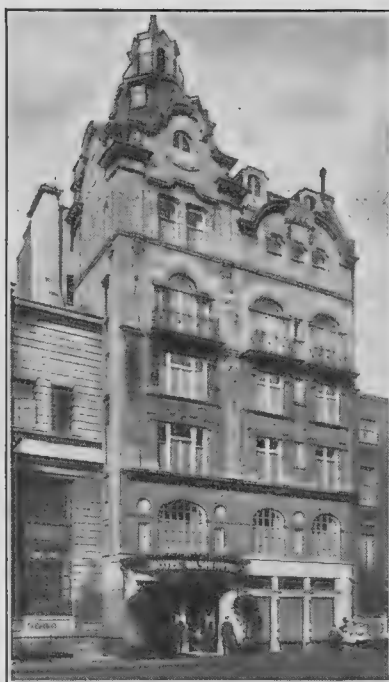


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Leander Swam the Hellespont

(Continued from p. 68)

down? That was the sort of thing a girl wanted to know about a man before making up her mind if she were going to love him. At ten o'clock Louise met Dick Harper as arranged. The plan was to take luncheon with them, climb to the foot of the glacier which spread green and treacherous below the Brébant and ski down from there.

It was quite an easy expedition for even a moderate skier, but Louise laughed to herself when she thought how stiff Dick Harper would be that night. It ought to sweat the mischief out of him, as he would say himself. He had only had about four days skiing in his life on the nursery slopes, and if he had enough energy left that evening after his first real expedition to try to kiss her, he would deserve to be allowed to; she was pretty sure she would not have to pay out.

Meanwhile Bassett, knowing nothing of anybody else's plans, was toiling up the Brébant. Though freezing hard, he climbed in his shirt sleeves, both his thick woollen jerseys tied round his waist; even so he could feel the sweat upon his forehead. He was fighting fit; had he not been, he would not have been able to make the climb in the time; as it was he reached the summit by noon, took off his skis, put on his sweaters, and sat down to eat his lunch.

Across the valley the majestic white dome of Mont Blanc towered above the lesser peaks. Far below, wreathed in a blue mist, he could see the cluster of houses, his hotel, and tiny black specks moving about on the skating rink. Alone up there amid the solitude and grandeur of the mountains, he felt far removed from Louise and all human matters; it was like being in another world.

Despite the altitude and the hard frost the sun was broiling hot and he sat for half an hour without gloves or hat as warm as if he had been on a sun-baked beach. Then a lengthening shadow cast by a rock warned him it was time to be going down.

He got up and studied the lie of the land to decide which way to take. Should he go to the right or left of the glacier? Below the glacier he knew there was a deep fissure called the Devil's Leap, which widened into a crevasse and ran right down

into the valley. Whichever way he chose he would have to stick to, for once started he would never get across the glacier or ravine.

He decided on the right-hand route, his mountaineer's eye picking out a chain of slopes that looked ski-able. He took the skins off his skis, slung his haversack over his shoulder, and set off.

Swish! swish! By heaven, the sound of skis cutting through virgin snow was glorious. In less than no time he was half-way down the Brébant. A guide! Who wanted a guide? Mountains were made for a man to be alone among. He would not have had company with him for all the money in the world. Once, when skimming down at thirty miles an hour, he came with alarming suddenness upon a precipice and flung himself backwards in the snow on the very brink. But that was all in a day's work; a fellow need only keep his wits and use his eyes.

When he came to the foot of the glacier he decided to give his legs a rest, took off his skis, and sat down upon a rock. He had just lit a cigarette when he spied two figures on the other side of the deep fissure that ran from the glacier down into the valley. They were some distance off, the leading figure was a good skier, he could see, and the other a beginner. They would be a couple who were doing the Col de Praz, a favourite trip among the smaller expeditions.

Bassett watched with amusement the heavy weather the beginner was making of the descent, then he suddenly saw the leader fall. It was a nasty fall of the headlong kind, and he noticed with concern the twisted attitude of one leg, ski stuck in air.

The fall had taken place a couple of hundred yards higher up than the point where Bassett was. Leaving his skis in the snow, he made his way back along the edge of the crevasse, noticing as he did so with increasing misgiving that the figure remained motionless in the snow. In the meanwhile the other, the beginner, was getting down to his comrade as best he could. When within a hundred yards of the mishap Bassett recognized Dick Harper and knew that the one on the ground must be Louise.

"Is she all right?" he called to Harper, as he came opposite the place and found Harper bending over Louise.

Dick Harper looked up, his face grave. "She has broken her leg."

(Continued on p. viii)



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A broken leg! Ye gods! There was not a soul in sight, and at most only another two hours' daylight. A broken leg on Col de Praz at that hour of the day. Poor Louise! This was ghastly. And the crevasse was between them; he could not help.

"Get her skis off, lash them together, then put her on 'em and try and get her down that way," he called to Harper.

"I haven't any cord."

The damned young fool, thought Bassett; then looking at Harper's bewildered face, he realized it would be hopeless anyway. An experienced guide might get someone with a broken leg down the Col de Praz single-handed; Bassett believed he could do it; but this young fellow, a novice among the mountains, could never hope to.

Bassett thought fast. To climb up to the Brébant again and come down on the other side of the glacier would take three hours. It would take still longer to go down into the valley and get up to her that way. In either event, before he could bring help, Louise would freeze to death.

If only he could get to the other side! Between them, Dick Harper and he could easily bring her down. But a crevasse a 100 ft. deep lay between; as he looked down into it Bassett could well understand why it had been called the Devil's Leap. There was no way of getting over it, even with the aid of his cord. Now and again a groan came from the figure on the ground. He looked round, distraught.

Suddenly he observed something. Immediately behind him there rose one of the steepest slopes he had ever seen; the slope ended abruptly on the edge of the Devil's Leap. Bassett studied the crevasse, trying to assess the width with his eye; the other side was on a lower level than the place where he was standing—that would help. He should say the width was about 50 metres. Why not try it? He would come down that slope with far more speed than he had done at the Grand Tremplin. Of course, if the crevasse was wider than he thought—if he failed to clear—he would fall into a 100-ft. abyss, and there his body would lie till a rescue party brought it up. The alternative was to leave Louise to freeze to death.

"Wait a minute," he called to Harper, "I'll come over to you."

"Come over! How?" Harper looked at the crevasse. "For Pete's sake, man, don't try anything of the kind; you'll never get across."

Harper imagined Bassett was proposing to take a running leap at the place as he would at a long jump.

All this while Louise knew nothing of what was going on. She had fainted from the pain of her broken leg. Dick Harper had a vague idea that to rub snow in a person's face was a good thing to do in any emergency, and proceeded to apply this remedy vigorously. After a few minutes Louise opened her eyes and saw him kneeling by her. "Aouw! My leg," she groaned. Then she observed Dick Harper looking across the crevasse and saw a figure on skis, half-turned away from her, balancing at the top of a steep slope, after the fashion of ski jumpers before they take off.

Suddenly the figure turned, and came speeding down the slope at lightning pace. As he reached the edge of the crevasse Bassett flung out his arms wide, then let himself go into the air.

If ever a man made a leap that meant either life or death, Bassett knew he was making one at that moment. He had only been able to judge the width of the crevasse, which looked to him to be about 50 metres. But he could not be certain; distances were deceptive; it might be more—a great deal more. And then—if he failed to clear, if he fell into the crevasse—that meant certain death.

Louise, lying there, watched that figure come soaring through the air, body erect, shoulders back, right across the yawning gap. And as she watched she forgot her pain, realizing only that she was seeing one of the finest ski jumpers in Europe making one of the greatest leaps in history; a leap that saved two lives.

Now there is not much more to be said, except that at the very time that Victor Bassett and Dick Harper were bringing Louise down the mountain as tenderly as they could, Louise's husband was being carried to his last rest in Happy Valley, Hong Kong, having succumbed to an acute attack of alcoholic poisoning.

Oh, yes, and if it is a boy, Louise says he shall be called Leander.

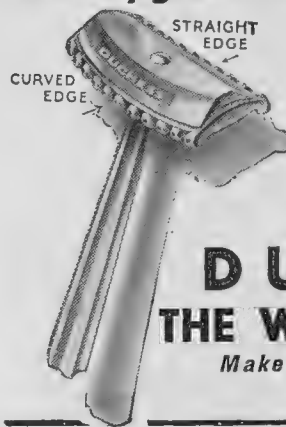
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Centre.—Yacht racing in the Great Sound.

Below.—Street scene in Paget Parish, Bermuda.



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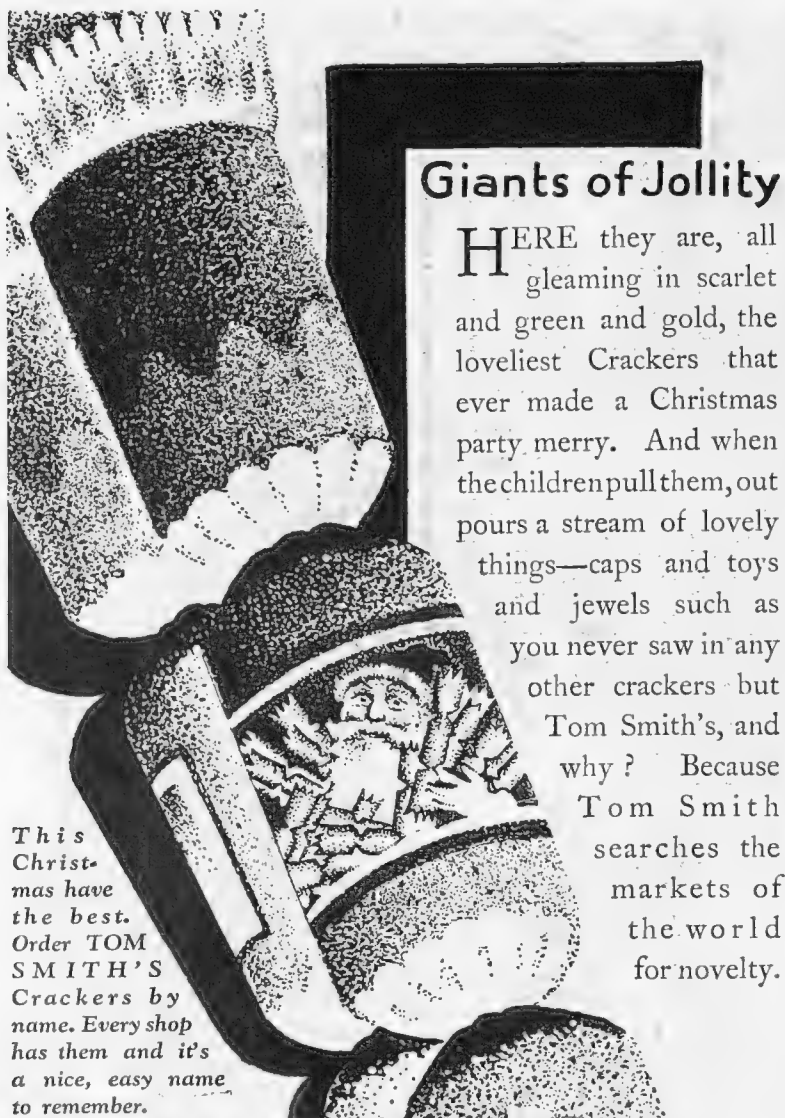
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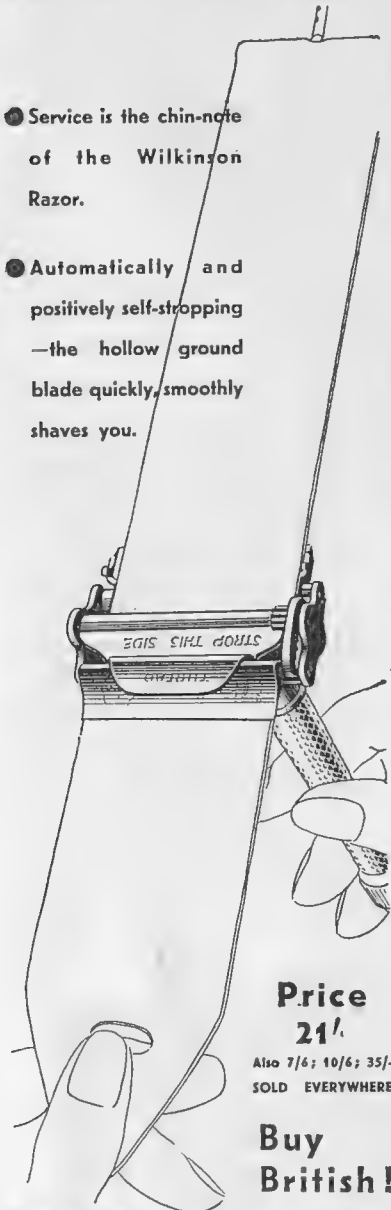
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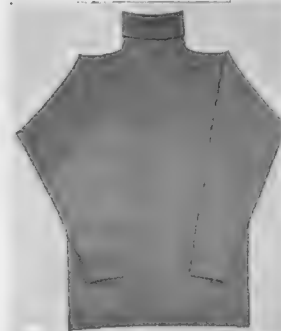
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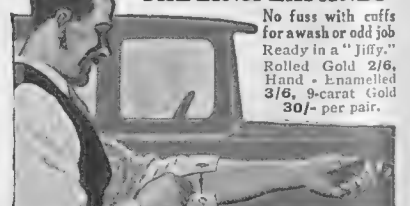


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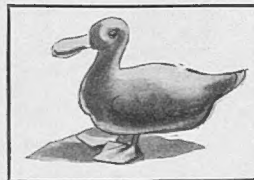
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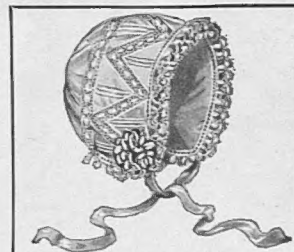
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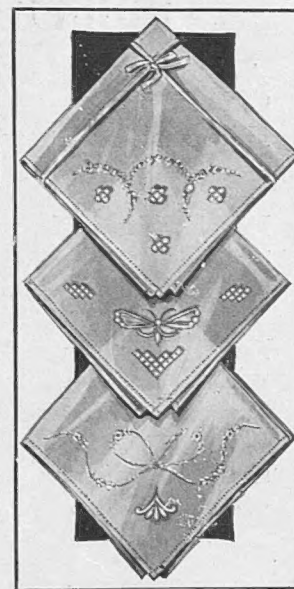
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